

The First Book of SAMUEL Otherwise Called the First Book of the Kings

INTRODUCTION

[Following is the introduction to both 1 and 2 Samuel, which are parts of one whole.]

1. Title. The two books known today as 1 and 2 Samuel appear as one volume, in all Hebrew manuscripts prepared before 1517. It was not until the translation of the Old Testament into Greek, about the 3d century before Christ, that the book was first divided into two parts. In that translation, the LXX, these two parts appeared as “First of Kingdoms” and “Second of Kingdoms”; the books we now know as 1 and 2 Kings appeared as “Third of Kingdoms” and “Fourth of Kingdoms.” The Latin Vulgate of Jerome, dating from the 4th century A.D., is the first to make the titles read “Kings” rather than “Kingdoms.” As late as several centuries after Christ the Masoretes noted that the statement of 1 Sam. 28:24 was at the middle of the book in the Hebrew text. Hebrew Bibles, in fact, preserved the original arrangement until the edition printed by Daniel Bomberg in Venice in 1517.

Because the life and ministry of Samuel dominate the first half of the book, in its original form, his name was attached to it. This title was appropriate in view of his important role as the last of the judges, one of the greatest of the prophets, founder of the schools of the prophets (see Ed 46), and the one who led out in the establishment of the Hebrew kingdom and in the laying down of the fundamental principles on which it was to operate (see 1 Sam. 10:25). Essentially, the name Samuel thus designates content rather than authorship.

2. Authorship. In contrast with the Pentateuch, where it is specifically stated, regarding certain portions, that they were written by Moses, the books of Samuel contain no information as to who the author or authors may have been. According to Jewish tradition the first 24 chapters of 1 Samuel were written by Samuel, and the remainder of 1 Samuel, together with 2 Samuel, by Nathan and Gad (see 1 Chron. 29:29). When the book was divided—in the Hebrew text and in most English translations—the original name, Samuel, was applied to both parts even though his name is not once mentioned in the second part. Samuel’s death is recorded in 1 Sam. 25:1, and his name appears for the last time in the books of Samuel in 1 Sam. 28:20.

In view of the fact that David is pre-eminent in the second part, his name might be a more appropriate title for 2 Samuel. The statement of the Talmud that Samuel wrote all of that which now bears his name is obviously in error, for all of 2 Samuel—as well as the last part of 1 Samuel—records the history of Israel after his death. Some Bible scholars have pointed to 1 Sam. 27:6 as evidence that the books of Samuel date from the time of the divided kingdom. But if the two parts of Samuel were written at different times by different authors, why were they originally published as one? Yet, if they represent the continuous work of one author, he must have written following the deaths of Saul (2 Sam. 21:1–14) and David (see 2 Sam. 23:1). It seems most reasonable to conclude that 1 and 2 Samuel represent composite authorship, and that they are a collection of narratives, each complete in itself. Each writer wrote by inspiration, and all parts were eventually brought together as a united whole under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

3. Historical setting. The book of 1 Samuel covers the transitional period from the judges to the united kingdom of Israel, including the last judgeship, that of Samuel, and

the first reign, that of Saul. The second book of Samuel deals exclusively with the reign of David. 1 Samuel therefore covers nearly a century, from about 1100 to 1011 B.C. and 2 Samuel 40 years, or 1011 to 971 B.C.

The period from about 1200 to 900 B.C. was one of national unrest and political controversy. There was little sustained effort throughout the ancient world to record and preserve written accounts of contemporary events. Such ancient historians as Herodotus, Berosus, Josephus, and later Eusebius found it necessary to draw largely on folklore accounts for the events that took place in the world during this era. Consequently, it is necessary to check their statements by modern archeological discoveries, which provide considerable information not previously available. New material is constantly coming to light to increase our store of knowledge of the period of time during which the events of 1 and 2 Samuel occurred.

This period of unrest, turmoil, and transition opened with the migrations of the Sea Peoples (see p. 27), which, directly or indirectly, affected all parts of the ancient East. Throughout the period covered by 1 and 2 Samuel the priest kings of the Twentieth Dynasty (see p. 26) and the secular rulers of the Twenty-first Dynasty ruled Egypt, their reigns marked by weakness and national decay and disunity. During most of this period Assyria was also extremely weak. In Babylon, conditions were much the same as in Egypt and Assyria, with internal weakness and foreign invasion the order of the day. The political influence of both Egypt and Syria thus disappeared from Palestine. Migrations of the Sea Peoples and the Aramaeans added to internal troubles, and kept the international political situation throughout the ancient East in a state of turmoil for the best part of two centuries.

As a result, the early kings of Israel were comparatively free to consolidate their control over the Promised Land and neighboring regions, without interference from their formerly strong neighbors to the north and south. Their only enemies were the local nations of Palestine, such as the Philistines, the Amalekites, the Edomites, the Midianites, and the Ammonites. The resistance of these neighboring tribes was gradually overcome, and most of them submitted to Israelite control. David and Solomon eventually controlled large areas that had formerly belonged to the Egyptian Empire and to the nations of Mesopotamia.

When Israel entered Canaan the Lord had commanded them to assign cities to the Levites throughout the various tribes. Thus instruction in ways of righteousness might be given to all the people. But they seem to have paid little or no attention to the command. They did not, in fact, even drive out the Canaanites, but dwelt among them (Judges 1:21, 27, 29-33). Within a few years the Levites, who had received no specific tribal allotment, found themselves without employment. Even Jonathan, the grandson of Moses (see on Judges 18:30), visited the home of Micah the Ephraimite "to sojourn where" he could "find a place" (Judges 17:8), and became priest to Micah's "house of gods" (Judges 17:5). He eventually stole the images out of Micah's house and went with the migrant Danites to be their priest (see Judges 18). Thus at a time when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes," Israel violated God's plan that the Levites should instruct the people in His ways, and soon lapsed into the ignorant, superstitious ways of the heathen about them. Six times during the period of the judges God sought to awaken His people to the error of their course by permitting them to become subject to the surrounding

nations. But soon after each deliverance from servitude, they lapsed into indifference and idolatry.

Growing up in such an environment, Samuel chose to repudiate the evils of the day and to devote his life to the correction of these tendencies. His plan for accomplishing this centered in the establishment of the so-called “schools of the prophets.” One of these was at Ramah, his ancestral home (1 Sam. 19:19–24), and others were later established at Gilgal (2 Kings 4:38), Bethel (2 Kings 2:3), and Jericho (2 Kings 2:15–22). Here young men studied the principles of reading, writing, music, the law, and sacred history. They engaged in various trades, that they might as far as possible learn to be self-supporting. The expression “schools of the prophets” does not occur in the Old Testament, but the young men so trained were called “sons of the prophets.” They devoted their lives to the service of God and some of them were employed as counselors of the king.

Toward the close of his life Samuel was called upon to be the unwilling agent in the establishment of the monarchy. After discussing the question with the people, he wrote a book on “the manner of the kingdom” and laid it up before the Lord (1 Sam. 10:25). This was probably of no value to Saul, who is thought to have been unable to read. Samuel encouraged Saul with assurances of God’s abiding presence, but he soon rejected the inspired counsel of Samuel, surrounded himself with a strong bodyguard, and quickly made himself an absolute ruler.

Following Saul’s rejection, Samuel was called upon to select and train a man according to God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14), one who would not set himself above the law but who would obey God. David’s training, like that of Christ, was carried on in the face of jealousy and hatred. Although David sometimes fell into transgression of the law he revered and advocated, he always humbled his heart before that law as supreme. As a result of David’s cooperation with the principles laid down by God through Moses and Samuel, Israel gradually subdued all her enemies, and the boundaries of the nation were pressed northward practically to the Euphrates and southward to the borders of Egypt. God was able to bless Israel, and as a result they enjoyed an era of national prosperity and glory that continued throughout the reign of Solomon, and has never since been equaled.

4. Theme. The first book of Samuel records and accounts for the rather sudden transition from centuries of pure theocracy, operating through prophets and judges, to the status of kingdom. The record of Saul’s reign reveals some of the problems that accompanied the establishment of the kingdom, and explains why the house of David replaced that of Saul. The second book of Samuel deals with the glorious reign of David, first at Hebron and later in Jerusalem, and concludes with his purchase of the threshing floor of Araunah, on which the Temple was later constructed by Solomon. The account of David’s last years and death appears in the early chapters of 1 Kings.

5. Outline.

1 SAMUEL

- I. History of Samuel, Israel’s Restorer, 1 Sam. 1:1 to 7:17.
 - A. Birth and early training, 1:1 to 2:11.
 - 1. Elkanah and Hannah, 1:1–8.
 - 2. Hannah’s prayer, 1:9–18.
 - 3. Birth and early years of Samuel, 1:19–23.
 - 4. Presentation of Samuel to God, 1:24–28.
 - 5. Hannah’s song of praise, 2:1–11.

- B. Conditions in the priesthood, 2:12–36.
 - 1. Ministry of Eli's sons, 2:12–17.
 - 2. The child Samuel's ministry, 2:18, 19.
 - 3. God's blessing on Elkanah and Hannah, 2:20, 21.
 - 4. Eli's failure in discipline, 2:22–36.
- C. Samuel's introduction to the prophetic office, 3:1 to 4:1.
 - 1. God's message to Eli, 3:1–18.
 - 2. Samuel's development as prophet, 3:19 to 4:1.
- D. Capture and return of the ark, 4:2 to 7:1.
 - 1. Israel's battle with the Philistines, 4:2–9.
 - 2. The ark captured; Eli's sons slain, 4:10, 11.
 - 3. Death of Eli the judge and priest, 4:12–22.
 - 4. The ark in Philistia, 5:1 to 6:1.
 - 5. The return of the ark of Israel, 6:2 to 7:1.
- E. Samuel's 20-year ministry, 7:2–6.
- F. The subjugation of the Philistines, 7:7–14.
- G. Samuel's judgeship established, 7:15–17.
- II. The Creation of a Monarchy, 1 Sam. 8:1 to 15:35.
 - A. The call for a king, 8:1–22.
 - B. Events leading to Saul's anointing, 9:1–27.
 - C. Saul called to be king, 10:1–27.
 - 1. The anointing, 10:1.
 - 2. Supernatural evidences of God's favor, 10:2–13.
 - 3. Saul's silence on returning home, 10:14–16.
 - 4. Election of Saul by lot, 10:17–25.
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 - D. Events leading to final confirmation of Saul as King, 11:1 to 12:25.
 - 1. Battle with the Ammonites, 11:1–11.
 - 2. Acclamation of Saul as king, 11:12–15.
 - 3. Samuel's release of administrative power, 12:1–15.
 - 4. God's witness to the people's choice, 12:16–18.
 - 5. Samuel's continued interest and prayers, 12:19–25.
 - E. War with the Philistines, 13:1 to 14:46.
 - 1. Saul's presumption at Gilgal, 13:1–23.
 - 2. Jonathan's exploit at Michmash, 14:1–23.
 - 3. Saul's ill-advised decisions, 14:24–46.
 - F. Genealogy of Saul's house, 14:47–52.
 - G. Saul's second test, 15:1–35.
 - 1. His sparing of Agag, 15:1–9.
 - 2. The Lord's rejection of Saul, 15:10–35.
- III. The Training of David for Kingship, 1 Sam. 16:1 to 31:13.
 - A. The anointing of David, 16:1–13.
 - 1. Samuel's hesitancy in visiting Bethlehem, 16:1–4.
 - 2. Jesse's sons and the anointing of David, 16:5–13.
 - B. Saul's derangement upon being rejected, 16:14–23.
 - C. The Philistine war and its consequences, 17:1 to 18:8.

1. Goliath's challenge, 17:1–11.
2. David's fortitude and victory, 17:12–58.
3. Jonathan's covenant, 18:1–4.
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- D. Saul's jealousy and its results, 18:9 to 19:24.
 1. David in danger, 18:9–12.
 2. Saul's duplicity in offering his daughter, 18:13–27.
 3. Saul's open enmity against David, 18:28 to 19:11.
 4. David's escape from his home to Samuel, 19:12–18.
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- E. Jonathan's pact with David, 20:1–42.
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 4. David warned of danger, 20:35–40.
 5. Jonathan's farewell to David, 20:40–42.
- F. David in flight from Saul, 21:1 to 22:23.
 1. David's flight to Nob and Ahimelech, 21:1–9.
 2. Escape to Achish at Gath, 21:10–15.
 3. Departure to cave of Adullam, 22:1, 2.
 4. Flight to Moab, 22:3, 4.
 5. Return to Judah, 22:5.
 6. Saul's vengeance on people of Nob, 22:6–23.
- G. David's help to Keilah; their ingratitude, 23:1–12.
- H. David's second flight from Saul, 23:13 to 24:22.
 1. Flight to Wilderness of Ziph, 23:13–15.
 2. Visit of Jonathan, 23:16–18.
 3. Saul's ineffectual march against David, 23:19–28.
 4. David's departure to En-gedi, 23:29 to 24:2.
 5. David's magnanimity to Saul at En-gedi, 24:3–22.
- I. Death of Samuel, 25:1.
- J. David's experience with Nabal and Abigail, 25:2–44.
- K. Saul's last attempt to kill David; its results, 26:1–25.
- L. David's second flight to Gath, 27:1 to 28:2.
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 2. Achish orders David to go with him to battle, 28:1, 2.
- M. Saul's recourse to necromancy, 28:3–25.
- N. Achish' dismissal of David, 29:1–11.
- O. The raid of the Amalekites and its results, 30:1–31.
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2 SAMUEL

- I. David King Over Judah, 2 Sam. 1:1 to 5:5.
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 - B. David opposed by the house of Saul, 2:1 to 3:39.

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2. Ishbosheth made king over Israel by Abner, 2:8–11.
3. Defeat of Abner and death of Asahel, 2:12–32.
4. Increase of the house of David; the names of his sons, 3:1–5.
5. Abner's submission to David, 3:6–21.
6. Murder of Abner by Joab, 3:22–39.
- C. David gains sole authority over all Israel, 4:1 to 5:5.
 1. Murder of Ishbosheth, 4:1–8.
 2. Punishment of Rechab and Baanah, 4:9–12.
 3. David anointed king over all Israel, 5:1–5.
- II. David King Over All Israel, 2 Sam. 5:6 to 24:25.
 - A. David's early reign in power and splendor, 5:6 to 10:19.
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 2. Victory over the Philistines, 5:17–25.
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 5. Victories over foreign foes, 8:1–14.
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 7. David's reception of Mephibosheth 9:1–13.
 8. Defeat of the Ammonites and Syrians, 10:1–19.
 - B. David's sin and troubles, 11:1 to 21:22.
 1. David's adultery with Bath-sheba and the death of Uriah, 11:1–27.
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 - (1) Hushai sent to Absalom, 16:15–19.
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 - j. David's return to Jerusalem, 19:9–43.
 6. The revolt of Sheba, 20:1–22.
 7. David's officers, 20:23–26.

8. Three years' famine and the hanging of Saul's sons, 21:1–14.
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CHAPTER 1

1 Elkanah a Levite, having two wives, worshipeth yearly at Shiloh. 4 He cherisheth Hannah, though barren, and provoked by Peninnah. 9 Hannah in grief prayeth for a child. 12 Eli first rebuking her, afterwards blesseth her. 19 Hannah having born Samuel, stayeth at home till he be weaned. 24 She presenteth him, according to her vow, to the LORD.

1. Now. From the Hebrew word that is usually translated “and,” but also “now,” “then,” or “but,” according to the context. It does not necessarily connect this book with preceding writings. Ezekiel, for instance, opens with the same word, yet no one claims that book to be merely a continuation of some previous work.

Ramathaim-zophim. Literally, “two high places of the watchmen,” or, “twin heights of the Zuphites,” indicating either twin cities or perhaps two sections of the same city, for in chs. 1:19 and 2:11 Ramathaim-zophim is referred to simply as Ramah. The location of Ramah, the home of Samuel, is not known. For a consideration of the various proposed sites, see Additional Note at close of chapter.

Elkanah. Literally, “whom God has bought.” A Levite (1 Chron. 6:33–38; cf. vs. 22–28; PP 569) of the family of Kohath who lived in the tribe of Ephraim. It is interesting to find that Samuel was a descendant of Korah (1 Chron. 6:33–38), who so violently opposed the Lord's decision to make Aaron's sons priests (see Num. 16). Here is evidence that children are not punished for the sins of their fathers, but that “every man shall be put to death for his own sin” (Deut. 24:16).

2. Two wives. The name Hannah signifies “graciousness,” whereas Peninnah means “one with rich hair.” At this period in the world's history polygamy was considered ethical, and God permitted it (see on Deut. 14:26). Yet because of financial restrictions only the well-to-do class and kings seem to have indulged in plural marriages. Rulers sought to secure peace through sending a princess to the harem of another monarch. But instead of peace the practice of polygamy often brought intrigue, jealousy, and failure to both royal harem and private home. In NT times polygamy rendered a man unfit for any religious office (1 Tim. 3:2, 12).

3. Went up. Since he lived perhaps only 12 mi. (19 km.) from the tabernacle in Shiloh, it was natural for Elkanah, a Levite, to be regular in his attendance at the three feasts of the year (see on Ex. 23:14–17; Lev. 23:2), and especially at the first and most important one, the Passover, in the early spring. This feast, typifying the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, also pointed their hearts forward to the great antitypical Passover Lamb, Jesus, who through His great sacrifice provided the way for man's

redemption from the house of spiritual bondage (1 Cor. 5:7). Although his services were not required at the sanctuary, yet, like many another Levite during the period of the judges (Judges 17:8, 9), Elkanah went up as a common Israelite with his own sacrifices to encourage his neighbors and set them a good example. Though he lived in the midst of an evil environment, his spirituality was evidently at a high level. Even though Hophni and Phinehas were corrupt, Elkanah was faithful in his worship and in the offering of his sacrifices. This was also true of Anna and Simeon in the days of Christ (Luke 2:25–38). The same should be true in modern times. One's allegiance to Christ is not to be dependent on the works of others.

Sons of Eli. Even at this early date nepotism—favoritism to one's relatives in making appointments to office—had taken a firm hold on Israel. While the specter of unemployment faced the Levites scattered in every tribe, three members of Eli's family—the father and two sons—secured a living, irrespective of the fact that two of them were not morally qualified for the office. Such a miscarriage of justice is always a contributing factor to discontent and revolution.

5. A worthy portion. Literally, “one portion of two faces.” Elkanah exerted every influence at his command to bring unity, giving each member of his family a “portion.” To show publicly that it was not his wish that Hannah should be barren, he gave her a double portion, as if she had a child (see PP 569).

6. Provoked her sore. Peninnah's attitude was due, in part, to Elkanah's well-intentioned generosity. Even as in the case of Satan in heaven, jealousy over attentions offered another, whether in the home or elsewhere, breeds a taunting, exasperating malice that finds expression in the icicle drippings of ridicule. Such tauntings not only deprived Hannah of appetite but also caused her to refrain from partaking of the feast. Was it because she felt unworthy, as Aaron did after the death of his sons, Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:19)? Did she not need the spiritual blessings of the feast all the more, under the circumstances? It might also be asked, How much of the blessing of the feast had Peninnah received, seeing she permitted herself to taunt her fellow? Such a situation was comparable to that mentioned by Christ in the story of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:10–14). However, like the publican, Hannah did not render railing for railing, but kept the trouble wholly to herself and gave way to quiet tears.

9. Hannah rose up. Hannah did not harden herself in sorrow and self-pity, nor grow sullen when spoken to by her husband, but manifested a commendable degree of self-control. She found refuge at the sanctuary.

11. Give him unto the Lord. Hannah's acceptance of God's spiritual gift to her through the feast impelled her plea for a more tangible gift—a son—promising that such a gift would be immediately returned to the Lord, holy and consecrated to Him. Perhaps God had waited long for such a surrender; He could have opened her womb before, but was she ready to bear the responsibility?

Worldly wisdom teaches that prayer is not essential, that there can be no real answer to prayer, that this would violate natural law, and that miracles just cannot be. It is part of God's plan to grant, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not otherwise bestow (GC 525). Why? Because it is part of Heaven's plan that man voluntarily surrender as fully to the infilling and outworking of the Holy Spirit as did Christ when He was here on earth. So far as God was concerned it was not necessary for Abraham to wait 25 years for the fulfilling of the divine covenant. When the patriarch came to the place

where he could enter fully into Heaven's plan for him, God was able to turn all past failures into steppingstones of blessing. So it was with Hannah.

But God did not speak to her through an angel; He used the appointed medium of the priesthood, even though it was imperfect and in need of reformation. God recognized the fact that Hannah's natural desire for offspring had finally been absorbed in a passion for devoting the most precious of gifts to Him, and He answered her petition through Eli.

14. Drunken. Eli, the guardian of the sanctuary and the chief authority in law and religion, judged from circumstantial evidence rather than from the heartthrobs of his worshippers. He was measuring Hannah by the criterion of his own experience with his sons, yet he was not past the point where he could understand the unfolding revelation of God. Through Hannah's experience the Holy Spirit revealed to him that God looks upon the motives of the heart.

16. Count not. With calm self-possession under the sting of such a rebuke, with gentleness of spirit, and with respectful deference to one in authority, Hannah delicately referred to the private sorrows that had occasioned his misapprehension, and fearlessly affirmed her innocence. It was the same spirit in which Christ answered His accusers.

17. Go in peace. Peace comes only on the cessation of hostilities, on full victory or surrender. Having made such a surrender to the Lord, Hannah found that the animosity and jestings of Peninnah lost their sting. With her Saviour she could say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Eli was quick to recognize the hand of God, and was moved by the Holy Spirit to indicate divine approval. Christ exemplified the true spirit of love and discrimination, and would impart that same spirit to His undershepherds. But whether or not they receive it, whether or not they pass it on to others, nothing can prevent the most lowly sheep of His pasture from hearing His voice and following Him. Hannah was not dependent on circumstances; she rested her case with God—and an answer came forthwith.

20. Samuel. The name means "heard of God," and like other personal names in the Bible, it was full of significance. "Samuel" was a memorial of her request to the Lord, a reminder of her pledge, and a recognition of God's approval. Time was to demonstrate the truth of all this. From his earliest childhood Samuel recognized that he was the servant of the Lord.

22. Hannah went not up. Samuel was looked upon by his mother not merely as a child but as an offering to God. Therefore she sought to have him trained for God from his earliest infancy. She ministered to his physical needs with much care and prayer, directing his thoughts toward the Lord of hosts from the very earliest age. That she might the more perfectly fulfill her trust, she did not visit Shiloh till after he was weaned. How far reaching is the influence of a mother in Israel! Whether she be an exile and a slave, like Jochebed the mother of Moses, or the persecuted member of a Levite home in Canaan, her moments are priceless. Realizing this, Hannah began to work not only for time but for eternity. It was her responsibility to impress upon a human soul the image of the divine. Thus it was also with Mary the mother of Jesus.

More than once there has been entrusted to a handmaiden of the Lord the task of reviving the decadent faith of a sin-loving and discouraged people who have failed to realize that God makes use of the weak things of the world to confound the wise. Meditate on Jochebed's consecration to her task, on Hannah's clear vision as she brought Samuel into the world, or on Mary's sense of solemn responsibility as she replied to the

angel's message, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word" (Luke 1:38).

But even with the most earnest thought on the part of the mother, the child still has to make his own choice in life. So it was with Samson, for instance. Yet even Samson, after a long period of self-serving, caught a vision of God that led him to give his life with no thought of return, a consecration that placed him in the great galaxy of those who triumphed through faith, as recorded in the 11th chapter of Hebrews. How true it is that the very ones whom God proposes to use as His instruments for a special work, Satan seeks to employ, to lead astray.

For ever. See on Ex. 12:14; 21:6. By "for ever" Hannah meant that Samuel was to be a Nazirite for life (1 Sam. 1:11; see also on Gen. 49:26; Num. 6:2). A fragment from the book of 1 Samuel found in the fourth cave at *Khirbet Qumrân* and published in 1954 specifically states that Samuel was a Nazirite.

23. Her husband said. Elkanah consented to the vow of his wife (Num. 30:6, 7), and according to 1 Sam. 1:21, made it his own (see on Num. 30:6).

The Lord establish. That is, "May the plan of the Lord for Samuel come to pass" God had already acknowledged His part in the fulfillment of Hannah's prayer and vow. Elkanah believed (1) that God had indeed spoken by Eli (v. 17); (2) that Samuel's birth confirmed the divine origin of Eli's promise (v. 20); and (3) that the promise would be completely fulfilled in Samuel's life of ministry.

Much depends upon the cooperation of husband and wife in the Christian home. Elkanah was deeply touched by the consecration of his wife and heartily joined her in her desire. He is an excellent example of Paul's admonition, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). He assumed responsibility for her vow and associated himself most intimately with it, yet recognized her freedom of choice and desired that her choice of consecration to God meet with success. His attitude illustrates the desire in the heart of Christ to work with each man in such a way as to enable him to express his own individuality, and thereby reveal to the universe the prismatic beauty of the divine character.

24. Three bullocks. The LXX reads, "a bullock in its third year." According to v. 25, "they slew a bullock." Abraham, in his consecration sacrifice, used a heifer three years old (Gen. 15:9). Elkanah's sacrifice presented in fulfillment of the vow (vs. 11, 21) consisted of a bullock, with its requisite cereal and wine offerings (Num. 15:9, 10). Because Elkanah and Hannah brought a whole ephah of flour, and the amount required for one bullock was three tenths of an ephah (Num. 15:8–10), it is probable that the bullock mentioned in v. 25 was the burnt offering with which the child Samuel was consecrated to the Lord, and that the other two bullocks were sacrificed as the accompanying sin offering and peace offering, each of which would require three tenths of an ephah of flour. The fact that Elkanah brought a whole ephah of flour, sufficient for three bullocks, implies that the LXX and other translations that read "a bullock in its third year," are in error.

27. This child. Samuel's age when he was weaned is not known. It is a common thing in the Orient for a child to continue nursing till he is three years old, and it is quite possible that Isaac, for example, could have been five years old when Abraham held the feast at which he made Isaac his heir (see Gen. 21:8). Since Hannah had not attended the feast since Samuel's birth, Eli had probably forgotten the incident.

According to this verse Hannah had not told Eli the nature of her request, but now with great joy she proceeded to do so. In giving expression to her joy she made a turn on the Hebrew word *sha'al*, “to ask,” using different forms of the verb. Translated literally the text reads, “Concerning this child I interposed myself, and the Lord hath given me my asking which I asked of him, and I am also constrained to ask him for the Lord. As long as he lives he is asked for the Lord.” Hannah recognized with joy that her gift to God was first His gift to her. She could say with David, “Of thine own have we given thee” (1 Chron. 29:14). It was such love as this that led Ruth to exclaim, “The Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me” (Ruth 1:17), and Paul to affirm, “To me to live is Christ” (Phil. 1:21).

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 1

The exact location of Ramathaim-zophim, the home of Samuel, is not known. Various sites have been suggested: (1) *Beit Rima* in Ephraim, 11 mi. (18 km.) west of Shiloh, where the mountains of central Palestine fall away to the rolling hills of the Shephelah, or possibly 5 mi. (8 km.) farther west at *Renṭis*; (2) *er-Rām* in Benjamin, about 5 1/2 mi. (8.8 km.) north of Jerusalem on the road to Shechem; (3) Ramallah in Ephraim, 9 mi. (14.4 km.) north by west of Jerusalem, 12 mi. (19.2 km.) south by west of Shiloh, and 1 3/4 mi. (2.8 km.) southwest of Bethel.

Beit Rima, 11 mi. (17.6 km.) west of Shiloh, and *Renṭis*, even farther west, were too far distant from Gibeah of Saul (in Benjamin) to be Samuel’s home (1 Sam. 9:1 to 10:9; cf. PP 608, 609). Saul would not have been looking for his father’s asses 25 or 30 mi. from home within two days of the time they had been missed, nor would it have been possible for him and his servant to search all the hills, valleys, and ravines of that mountainous terrain by the third day. Other cities by the name of Ramah in Asher (Joshua 19:29), Naphtali (Joshua 19:36), Simeon (Joshua 19:8), and Manasseh (Ramoth-gilead, Deut. 4:43, cf. 2 Kings 8:29; 2 Chron. 22:6) are even farther away and therefore impossible.

The weight of evidence seems to favor Ramallah, in the mountains of southern Ephraim, near the Benjamin border. A town located in this vicinity meets all known specifications for the home of Samuel. The Ramah of Judges 4:5, near which was the palm tree of Deborah, was not far from Bethel; as noted, Ramallah, about 1 3/4 mi. (2.8 km.) southwest of Bethel, could not be the Ramah of Benjamin, for the writer would then have named any one of several towns closer to Ramah of Benjamin than Bethel in the mountains of Ephraim.

Samuel was born at Ramah (1 Sam. 1:1, 19, 20; PP 572). It was here that he served Israel as priest, prophet, and judge, and that he established one of the two original schools of the prophets (1 Sam. 7:17; 8:4; 15:34; 19:18–20; PP 593, 604). This was evidently the unnamed town where Saul met Samuel for the first time and was anointed king (9:5, 6, 11, 14, 18; PP 608, 609). Here Samuel died and was buried (1 Sam. 25:1; 28:3).

The Ramah of Samuel was also known as Ramathaim-zophim (1 Sam. 1:1, 19), in the “land of Zuph” (1 Sam. 9:5; cf. PP 608, 609). Zuph was a descendant of Levi through Kohath, and an ancestor of Samuel in the fifth generation (1 Chron. 6:33–38). In the division of Canaan the Kohathite Levites were assigned cities in various tribes, including Judah, Benjamin, and Ephraim (see Joshua 21:4, 5; 1 Chron. 6:54–70). The district in which the descendants of Zuph—the Zophites—lived would properly be known as the

“land of Zuph” (1 Sam. 1:1; 9:5), and their city, Ramah, as Ramathaim-zophim, literally, “Ramathaim of the Zophites.”

Elkanah, Samuel’s father, was “of mount Ephraim,” and probably, like his ancestor Zuph, an Ephrathite (1 Sam. 1:1). An Ephrathite was a resident either of Bethlehem (Ruth 1:2; 1 Sam. 17:12) or of Ephraim (1 Kings 11:26). Elkanah was apparently an Ephrathite in the latter sense. Mt. Ephraim was simply the mountainous region within the boundaries of the tribal allotment of Ephraim, and did not properly include any part of the mountains of Benjamin (see Judges 18:12, 13; 19:13–16; 1 Sam. 9:4). No place in Benjamin is spoken of in the Bible as being in “mount Ephraim.”

Later the Lord described Saul to Samuel as “a man *out* of the land of Benjamin” (1 Sam. 9:16). Furthermore, when Saul left Ramah, the home of Samuel, in Mt. Ephraim, he crossed the border of Benjamin in order to reach his own home at Gibeah, in Benjamin (1 Sam. 10:2–9; PP 608, 609).

Some have identified the unnamed city of 1 Sam. 9:1 to 10:9 as Bethlehem. This identification is based on the statement of Gen. 35:16–19 that Rachel was buried “but a little way” from “Ephrath, which is Beth-lehem,” and the reference of 1 Sam 10:2 to Rachel’s tomb as being “in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah.” But, as with Ramah, the exact site of Rachel’s tomb is not known. It was on the road between Bethel and Bethlehem (Gen. 35:16–19), a distance of something more than 15 mi. (24 km.). But the Hebrew of Gen. 35:16, “a little way to come to Ephrath,” reads literally, “some distance from Ephrath,” and seems to imply some *considerable* distance (see on Gen. 35:16).

The traditional site of Rachel’s tomb, 1 1/8 mi. (1.8 km.) north by west from Bethlehem, would be about 4 mi. (6.4 km.) from the Benjamin border. But according to the Hebrew of 1 Sam. 10:2, Rachel’s tomb was much closer to the border than this, possibly even within the boundaries of Benjamin. If, however, the northern rather than the southern border of Benjamin be understood, there is harmony with both the Hebrew of Gen. 35:16 and the location of Zelzah north of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah’s mention of the voice of “Rahel weeping for her children” (Jer. 31:15; cf. Gen. 35:16–19) being heard “in Ramah” implies that Rachel’s tomb was not far from Ramah, and this agrees with Samuel’s instructions to Saul in 1 Sam. 10:2. But the traditional site near Bethlehem would be more than 9 mi. (14.4 km.) from Ramah in Benjamin and nearly 13 mi. (20.8 km.) from Ramallah in Ephraim. Jeremiah’s reference to “Rahel weeping for her children” is based on the historical incident of the assembling of Judean captives at Ramah in preparation for the journey to Babylon (see Jer. 31:1–17; 40:1). The prophetic application of Jeremiah’s statement is made in Matt. 2:18 (see on Deut. 18:15). Unless this Ramah was near Rachel’s tomb, Jeremiah’s reference to “Rahel weeping for her children” would be rather pointless. His further reference to Samaria and Mt. Ephraim (Jer. 31:5, 6) seems to call for a Ramah near the border of Benjamin and Ephraim, and this corroborates the information given in 1 Sam. 10:2.

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1–28PP 569–571

3 SR 184

8, 10, 14–17, 20PP 570

22 PP 592

27, 28 PP 571

28 5T 304

CHAPTER 2

1 *Hannah's song in thankfulness.* 12 *The sin of Eli's sons.* 18 *Samuel's ministry.* 20 *By Eli's blessing Hannah is more fruitful.* 22 *Eli's reproveth his sons.* 27 *A prophecy against Eli's house.*

1. *Rejoiceth in the Lord.* This second visit to Shiloh was of an entirely different nature from that recorded in ch. 1. Then Hannah's burden was an intercession for herself; now it is a great litany of praise. As a result of her full surrender to the Lord she is happy for the privilege of giving back to her Creator that which He has given her. In doing so she experiences the highest form of joy, for has she not learned to appreciate His loving-kindness in a new way? She extols God as the author of mercy revealed in His compassion to the helpless. She gains a new vision of His power, now evident in His control over the hidden forces of nature, in silently counteracting the forces of evil that would dishearten and defeat her, and in causing an evil environment itself to contribute immeasurably to the depth and fullness of her joy. She understands anew the covenant made with her forefathers, that God's children should become a blessing to all nations. Hannah's song of joy was an inspired prophecy of David and of the Messiah (PP 572).

Hannah's experience may have proved to be the greatest blessing that could come into Peninnah's life. God was as anxious to save Peninnah as He was to save Hannah. How could He accomplish this more effectively than by showing the exaltation of a soul that trusted Him and did not retaliate evil for evil? Such was Christ's method in trying to win Simon the leper—by showing the blessing that could come to Mary Magdalene (Mark 14:3–9; Luke 7:37–50). Simon learned his lesson, and became an earnest disciple (DA 567, 568). Did Peninnah learn her lesson?

3. *Let not arrogance.* Hannah could have felt a personal supremacy over Peninnah, in view of the wonderful experience that had come to her. But do not the words of these verses indicate, rather, Hannah's yearning that her rival might see the beauty of full surrender to God, and realize the worthlessness of arrogance? Certainly no one would charge Hannah with a "holier than thou" attitude toward Peninnah after the way in which God had vindicated her humble consecration. If Christ had tears in His voice as He pronounced woes on the Pharisees (SC 13; DA 619, 620), may not Hannah's spirit of self-sacrifice in giving Samuel to the Lord have so touched Peninnah's heart that she understood anew how God weighs actions? Those who, like Peninnah, feel strong in their own might, He suffers to reap the fruit of that selfishness, which is spiritual death. But even those who are spiritually dead He is able to make alive. Christ offered Judas the very same opportunities that He offered Peter, yet one surrendered and the other did not.

7. *Maketh poor, and maketh rich.* Hannah recognizes that her salvation from reproach came from God, who has lifted her far above the taunt of Peninnah. The grief of earlier days is now turned to exaltation in the Lord. The prayer of yearning has given place to the praise of divine strength. Her lips, once closed in silent endurance, are now opened to extol God's almighty power. She thinks of her experience as a type of the triumph achieved by God for His people both individually and collectively. She finds inspiration for song far beyond the range of her own experience, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit looks forward to the joy of the redeemed as they stand on the sea of glass with a "new song" on their lips (Rev. 14:3). Such joy as Hannah felt was not selfish delight, but an enlarged understanding of the character of God, like unto that which caused the "sons of God" to shout for joy over the creation of the world (Job 38:7), or the

Israelites to acclaim the praise of the Lord after deliverance from the Egyptian host at the Red Sea, or the angel host to cry out, at Christ's birth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). The mockings and afflictions at home were the very environment in which such a vision of God's salvation could be so nurtured as to produce a heaven on earth. Hannah had heaven in her heart, for she had learned to love the world as Christ loves it (see DA 331, 641).

8. *He raiseth up.* By the power of God the Christian soul, ever conscious of its impotence, rises above the forces of selfishness. Girded with strength from on high, such a soul finds past doubts, fears, and temptations laid low. Victory takes the place of defeat, and in the fullness of joy the soul is formed in the image of Christ.

10. *Strength unto his king.* For years Hannah had been seeing through a glass, darkly (1 Cor. 13:12), but now by prophetic eye she tells of her faith in Christ's final and complete triumph. As God has exalted her "horn," so will He exalt the "horn" of His Anointed (see Phil. 2:9–11). May it not be that many living in this last generation will permit the Lord so to lift them up from the midst of their evil environment that, like Hannah, they will sing a song of praise and thanksgiving to Him on the sea of glass (Rev. 14:3)?

11. *The child did minister.* The word translated "child" is *na'ar*, meaning a boy of any age up to maturity. At the age of 17 Joseph is called a *na'ar*. The same term is used of Eli's sons in v. 17. How much older they were than Samuel is not known. According to the context he made them priests before they reached maturity. Estimates of Samuel's age range from 3 to 15 years (see EGW, Supplementary Material, on 1 Sam. 1:20–28).

When a child takes on some unusual responsibility, its parents many times seek thereby to gain advantage for themselves. Much credit must be given to Elkanah, who, though a Levite, continued his normal manner of life at Ramah. Knowing, as they surely did, the nature of the environment to which Samuel would be subjected, Elkanah and Hannah must have had some concern as they placed their gift to the Lord in the hands of Eli, and of his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas. How much greater must have been the concern of the divine Father as He placed His Son under the influence and scrutiny of the unworthy priests of His day. Christ was 12 years of age when He came to the attention of the priests, yet His conduct upon that occasion testifies to the reality of divine protection extended even to children who seek heavenly guidance (see on Luke 2:52). Samuel's experiences testify to the same divine guidance.

The Scriptures make clear that in the midst of this evil environment Samuel served the Lord. The word "minister" may refer to service, either secular or sacred. It is used of Joseph's responsibilities in Potiphar's house, and of Joshua's assistance to Moses in the mount of God (Ex. 24:13). Samuel's ability to withstand the evil influences that surrounded him, even as Joseph and Joshua did, may be attributed to his fixed decision to occupy himself with the things of God.

12. *Sons of Belial.* Literally, "sons without worth." Moses thus describes those who urged their fellows to serve other gods (Deut. 13:13). In the early days of the judges, the Levite traveling from Bethlehem stopped for the night at Gibeah and was set upon by "sons of Belial" (Judges 19:22). In the NT "Belial" is used as an epithet for Satan (2 Cor. 6:15). Even as Joseph was placed in the lap of royal degeneracy, so Samuel grew up surrounded by a degenerate priesthood, "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation" (Phil. 2:15).

Surrendered to evil passions, Hophni and Phinehas had no proper conception of the God they were supposed to serve. They enjoyed no communion with Him, felt no sympathy with His purposes, and had no sense of their obligation to Him. They merely employed their positions of hereditary right for their own selfish and corrupt ends. They robbed the people for the gratification of their own appetites. They robbed God not only of His portion of the sacrifices but also of the reverence and love of His worshipers. By their vile lusts they lowered the service of the Lord in the eyes of the people to the level of the sensual orgies of the neighboring idol groves. But God permits a soul to be placed in the midst of such surroundings to prove to the universe that an evil environment need not determine a soul's destiny. Knowing Judas' covetous spirit, no one today would think of making him treasurer, yet Jesus did so (DA 294, 295). He purposed that Judas should be so impressed with things of much greater worth that he would surrender himself wholeheartedly to his Saviour. Jesus loved Judas and would have liked to make him one of the chief apostles (see DA 295).

18. Ministered. Not in the sense of menial service, but of sacred duties connected with the work of the Levites about the sanctuary. The Hebrew word thus translated includes both kinds of "service."

A linen ephod. Here, a garment used by the inferior priests and Levites, and, at times, even by eminent persons among the people. For example, David danced before the Lord wearing a linen ephod (2 Sam. 6:14). This is not to be confused with the high priest's ephod of "gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen" on which was fastened the breastplate with its 12 stones and the Urim and the Thummim, by which inquiries were made of God (see on Ex. 28:6; cf. Judges 8:27). If the simpler linen ephod was of the same pattern as that of the high priest, as seems probable, it was a short, sleeveless garment consisting of front and back panels joined at the shoulders and drawn in at the waist with a girdle (see on Judges 8:27).

19. His mother. Hannah not only offered her son to the Lord but showed her love for him year by year. In the same way the Lord continually watches over His people. He not only gave His Son once for all but continually interests Himself in making that sacrifice progressively more effective in meeting the needs of even the weakest of His children (Matt. 6:30-34).

20. Lent to the Lord. What is lent to the Lord is sure to be returned with compound interest. Hannah dedicated one child to the Lord and was rewarded with five others. Abraham did so with Isaac, and God promised him seed "as the stars of the heaven" (Gen. 22:17). Christ promised a return of a hundredfold even in this life (Matt. 19:29; Luke 18:30).

22. Eli was very old. A fragment from the book of 1 Samuel found in the fourth cave at *Khirbet Qumrân* and published in 1954 reads, "Eli was ninety years old." Albright thinks this to be a transposition from ch. 4:15, where the LXX reads "ninety" for Eli's age at his death. However, the new fragment does not indicate that he was 90 when he died, but when Samuel had been serving him for some time.

25. Hearkened not. The ministry of Eli's sons is here contrasted with that of Samuel. Samuel grew in favor with both man and God; Hophni and Phinehas revered not the instructions of the Lord and turned deaf ears to their father's counsel. All men are free moral agents. If they choose to rest under the mighty hand of God (1 Peter 5:6), they are

exalted in due time; but if they choose to follow their own ways, they inevitably reap the fruit of such action.

The Lord would slay them. Literally, “it pleased the Lord to cause them to die.” They had rejected God’s protective control, chosen their own selfish way, and deliberately forsaken the counsel of Heaven. In turning away from the angel of the Lord (Ps. 34:7), they sealed their own doom. It was the Philistines who killed them (1 Sam. 4:10, 11), yet God permitted their death because of their refusal to follow Him. “God does not stand toward the sinner as an executioner of the sentence against transgression; but He leaves the rejecters of His mercy to themselves, to reap that which they have sown” (GC 36). So it was with Judas So it is with all who reject the pleadings of the Holy Spirit

27. *A man.* Eli died at 98 (ch. 4:15; see on ch. 2:22), when Samuel was old enough to be recognized as a prophet and as Eli’s probable successor as judge (ch. 3:19–21). Inasmuch as some time would naturally elapse between the two solemn warnings mentioned in chs. 2 and 3, it seems probable that this visit by the unnamed prophet took place soon after Samuel’s dedication. Otherwise, there is no apparent reason why Samuel might not have borne both messages from the Lord.

How long-suffering God is! Saul, for example, received warning after warning, and was given many years in which to think matters through, before he finally chose to take things into his own hands.

But Eli surrendered to the claims of kinship rather than perform his duty to God in behalf of the people. Virtue is not inherited, but acquired. The sons of Eli inherited a sacred responsibility and an honorable name, yet through selfishness they had so become the servants of Satan as to merit the universal complaints of the people. When their father failed to exercise his authority, he was warned that even as reverence and honor produce a harvest of character and usefulness, so the sowing of irreverence and dishonor results in sorrow and disappointment (v. 32). “The law of self-serving is the law of self-destruction” (DA [1940 ed.] 624).

34. *In one day.* As Hophni and Phinehas had dealt violently with the things of the Lord, so they were to meet violent deaths. Hoping to turn them from their evil course, God drew aside briefly the curtain of the future. It would have been natural to expect that when the sons heard this prophecy they would alter their lives, in order to avoid reaping its fulfillment. In making this prophecy, God simply foresaw their doom—He did not foreordain it. He who knows the end from the beginning knows all that affects the exercise of free choice. By warning individuals of what the future holds in store for them, God proves to the universe that men go so far of their own free choice that even that knowledge will not deter them.

35. *A faithful priest.* Scripture does not indicate the priest in whom this prophecy was fulfilled. Some scholars think it refers to Zadok, of the line of Eleazar, to whom Solomon gave the priesthood when Abiathar, of the line of Ithamar, was deposed because of his collaboration with Adonijah in an attempt to secure Solomon’s throne (1 Kings 2:27, 35). Others think it refers to Christ, and still others feel the prophecy is fulfilled in Samuel and his work. But the important lesson of this statement is to be found in the fact that man cannot prevent the final accomplishment of God’s desire to restore His own image in the heart of man. Israel had been given the sanctuary service, with all its detailed symbolism, to illustrate the means through which Christ works. Yet, even though priests and rulers reject the plan, still God’s purpose, knowing no haste or delay, moves steadily forward to

its full accomplishment. If he chooses to do so, man may associate himself with Christ in the accomplishment of this aim; if he refuses, he has only himself to blame. He cannot charge God with conspiracy against him.

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- 1–36PP 571–580
- 1–3PP 571
- 3 TM 438
- 6–10PP 571
- 9 MH 479
- 11 PP 572
- 12 3T 472; 4T 516
- 12–16PP 576
- 12–17PK 416
- 17 PP 576, 580, 609
- 18 CT 488, 537; PP 573; 3T 472; 4T 516
- 19 PP 572
- 22–243T 472
- 22–25PP 577
- 23–252T 620; 4T 199
- 25 PP 580
- 26 PP 573
- 27–30PP 577
- 30 AH 28; CH 50, 102; CSW 138; CT 374, 426; FE 81; MH 180; ML 284; MM 36; PK 485; PP 529, 579; SL 19, 66; 2T 40; 4T 538; 5T 136, 268, 304, 424, 448; 6T 144, 356; 7T 193; 8T 123, 153
- 35 PP 578

CHAPTER 3

1 *How the word of the Lord was first revealed to Samuel.* 11 *God telleth Samuel the destruction of Eli's house.* 15 *Samuel, though loth, telleth Eli the vision.* 19 *Samuel groweth in credit.*

1. There was no open vision. The word translated “open” is from the verb *paraş*, which means “to break forth,” or “to burst forth.” The expression therefore reads literally, “there was no vision being broken forth,” or “there was no vision bursting forth.” The preceding statement, to the effect that the word of the Lord was “precious” or “rare,” is descriptive of the contemporary situation—inspired messages seldom came to God’s people. Now, more specifically, the narrator explains why this situation existed—God did not appear to men in vision as often as in other times. Emphasis is not so much on the *manner* of revelation as on its *frequency*.

This is the first use in Scripture of the word *chazon*, “vision,” and the only instance of its use in the two books of Samuel. A comparison of *chazon* with *mar’ah*, also translated “vision,” clarifies God’s method of revealing His plans for the salvation of mankind. The word *chazon* is from a verb meaning “to perceive with inner vision,” whereas *mar’ah* is derived from a verb meaning “to see visually.” Both are used interchangeably with *chalom*, “dream.” The word *mar’ah* is commonly used in the earlier

books of the Bible to describe messages from God to men, either in dreams or by the personal visit of heavenly messengers. As Jacob started on his journey to Egypt (Gen. 46:2), God spoke to him “in the visions [*mar’ah*] of the night.” Jacob felt himself in the divine presence, and the revelation was as real as that received by Abraham when the three angels visited him before the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 18:2–22). This same kind of divine revelation is also called a dream, *chalom*, as when God warned Abimelech regarding Abraham’s wife (Gen. 20:3–13). At the time of the sedition of Aaron and Miriam, God said, “If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision [*mar’ah*], and will speak unto him in a dream [*chalom*].”

Daniel makes frequent use of all three words. When he relates the vision of the four beasts he uses *chazon* (Dan. 7:1, 2, 7, 13, 15) to describe the dream, *chalom* (ch. 7:1), in which future events were pictured symbolically. He uses the same word, *chazon*, in ch. 8:1 also. But when Daniel is troubled as to the meaning of the vision, he goes down by the riverside, where the angel Gabriel, who appears to him, is told to “make this man to understand the vision [*mar’ah*].” But Gabriel, after strengthening the prophet, says, “Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision [*chazon*].” (Dan. 8:16, 17).

The impression made upon Samuel by his heavenly visitant was so real that he referred to it in 1 Sam. 3:15 as a *mar’ah*. Therefore the statement in v. 1 does not imply that the Lord was unwilling to guide His people. The thought is stressed, however, that the spiritual and intellectual perceptions of Israel had now reached low ebb.

3. Ere the lamp. The seven-branched golden candlestick, placed on the south side of the holy place, was never to go out (see on Ex. 27:20, 21). The cups were filled with the best olive oil, symbolic of the Holy Spirit, and the high priest adjusted the lamps morning and evening at the time of placing incense on the altar before the veil that separated the holy from the most holy place (see on Ex. 30:7, 8). As the glow of these lamps illuminated the darkness of the night, so Christ is the light that illumines this dark world, ever shedding forth the glory of His love and sacrifice into the darkness of men’s hearts (see John 1:4, 5, 9).

As the candlestick illuminated the sanctuary of old, so the Holy Spirit provides spiritual illumination, by which men may have a clearer perception of the plan of salvation. But without the inner light to illumine the soul, the literal light could have but little value. The letter of the sanctuary ritual meant nothing if the spirit was not there (see Isa. 1:11, 13, 15, 16). Although both leaders and people were following the ways of the idolatrous nations about them, there were, here and there, humble souls such as Elkanah and his household who preserved the spiritual vision so greatly needed.

8. The Lord had called. When Samuel came to Eli the third time the aged priest perceived that it was God who spoke. That the Lord should pass him by to communicate with a mere youth might easily have created in his heart a spirit of professional jealousy. Remembering the message of the man of God in past years, however, Eli may have concluded that the message was for him and could have reasoned that the Lord should have revealed it to him directly. Eli’s honesty in dealing with Samuel under these conditions is greatly to be admired. Realizing, perhaps for the first time, that God was

preparing another to fill his office, he felt no grudge, but on the contrary did his utmost to prepare Samuel for his important post by giving the lad the best counsel he had. Samuel was instructed to think of himself as the Lord's servant, ready to hear His counsel and to do His bidding. What a lesson in Eli's experience for those who are fearful lest they do not receive the honor their office demands, and lest the hands of other men replace theirs at the tasks required of that office

10. *The Lord came.* Since it was a new experience for young Samuel, the Lord graciously manifested His presence in some definite way not described in detail. Ere a word was spoken, both the old priest and his young assistant had ample proof of the presence of a supernatural power, and like children instructed by their parents, both were brought by the Holy Spirit to the place where they were willing to listen and obey. Such would not have been true had the word of the Lord come to such as Hophni. For example, how different was the reception accorded the rebuke of God as it came to Saul on the one hand, and to David on the other. Saul was full of criticism, alibis, and self-justification (ch. 15:16–31), but David, because of many years of surrender to the Lord, offered no alibi for his sin and sought only for a clean heart and a right spirit (2 Sam. 12:1–14; cf. Ps. 51:10; 103:12).

The question may well be asked: Why did the Lord not speak to Eli directly? Eli seems to have been a sincere, humble man, one who desired peace and righteousness above all else. Why, therefore, bring Samuel into the case? But God no longer communicated with Eli and his sons (PP 581).

11. *I will do.* Samuel lived for years in an evil environment, and could not help seeing the difference between the instructions given in the scrolls of the law and the lives of the young priests who had been his intimate associates. Had he made inquiry of them, he would have received only angry rebuffs. His parents were not present to advise him, and he was hesitant to approach Eli himself. As he turned the matter over in his heart, the same question would come to him that comes to the mind of a godly youth today: If the Word of God lays down certain principles for the conduct of His work, and the leaders not only fail to follow these instructions, but are guilty of gross misconduct, why does He allow them to continue ministering in holy office?

Seed sowing is not followed immediately by the harvest, because time is needed for the fruit to reach maturity. The process of character development requires time—probationary time. Thus it was with Hophni and Phinehas; thus it is today. Eventually God brings to nought all who defy His statutes (Ps. 119:118). As Christ permitted Judas to occupy a position where he would have the opportunity to succeed, so He allowed Hophni and his brother to be placed in a position where they could, by relying on Him, become acceptable ministers of the covenant. But like Judas, the sons of Eli would not surrender to His guidance. By allowing self to reign supreme, they made it impossible for God to impart to them the necessary training. God knew what would happen should they continue in their perverse course, and in love and long-suffering warned them what the result would be. Yet, like Judas, they chose their own way, only to realize ultimately the truth expressed by Paul centuries later, “He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption” (Gal. 6:8). In his own experience, Samuel verified Paul's admonition, “Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9).

15. *Samuel feared.* In this world of sin it is never easy to be the mouthpiece of the Lord. Elijah took his life in his hands as he warned Ahab of the impending famine; but he

was fearless in his obedience, and God made Himself responsible for the results. Samuel was a mere youth! And he had to learn in his youth not to be afraid of men's faces, even as Jesus feared not to face the leaders of His time, while He was, as yet, a child of only 12 summers!

19. The Lord was with him. Eli's sun was about to set, but that of Samuel was already rising. Christ suffered the pangs of separation from the Father (see DA 685, 686, 753, 756), but God has never yet led His people through the total darkness of separation from Him. To Christ on the cross it appeared that He trod the winepress alone, yet His Father was there suffering with Him. To Samuel it might have seemed, after years of observing sin all about him, either that God winked at sin or that His plan for man had changed. But Samuel was unaware of how long God had waited for a young man to whom He could truly impart His Spirit, and commit the leadership of His work on earth.

When Saul, for example, failed, he was not immediately replaced. For a number of years he still had the opportunity of changing his mind and surrendering to the guidance of a loving Father. But bigotry and criticism soon gave way to rebellion against divine leadership, while pride and self-justification robbed him of spiritual virtue. During the years of Saul's testing, however, David was invited to sit at the feet of the King of kings, preparatory to taking over the responsibilities of the leadership of Israel.

None of his words. Samuel naturally had much to learn, but as a youth he was trained in the school of obedience to God's call. What a joy it must have been to the Lord to find a lad eager for the privilege of learning the ways of God and determined to obey Him whatever the cost! Little wonder he was accepted by the people as a prophet when hardly more than a child!

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–21PP 581–583

1–43T 472

1–6PP 581

7 PP 582

8–14PP 581

9 SL 12

11 TM 410

11–14SR 185

13, 14 1T 119, 217; 2T 624

14 1T 190

15–18PP 582

18 SR 185; 1T 119; 4T 200

19 CT 143

19, 20 PP 590

CHAPTER 4

1 *The Israelites are overcome by the Philistines at Eben-ezer. 3 They fetch the ark unto the terror of the Philistines. 10 They are smitten again, the ark taken, Hophni and Phinehas are slain. 12 Eli at the news, falling backward, breaketh his neck. 19 Phinehas' wife, discouraged in her travail with I-chabod, dieth.*

1. The word of Samuel. Most commentators agree that the first sentence of v. 1 belongs to the last verse of ch. 3, for it was not Samuel's counsel that Israel go to war with the Philistines. Inasmuch as Samuel is not mentioned again till after the ark had been

in Kirjath-jearim for many years, it may be that the princes of Israel had refused to consult the newly recognized prophet (ch. 7:3). The prophet of God would never have counseled sending the ark away from Shiloh (see on v. 3). But those who had rejected the instruction of the Lord regarding the worship to be offered Him would come to look upon the ark with superstitious fear and to think of it as a talisman whose magic qualities assured them blessings of every kind.

All Israel, however, recognized the difference between Samuel and the sons of Eli, and those who were spiritually-minded came to the new prophet for counsel and help. They knew of his prophecy against Eli and his house, and were convinced that his call was of the Lord. When leaders err, many permit the moral tone of their own lives to fall. But there are always a few who are not turned away from the path of right by the conduct of their social superiors.

The Philistines. The book of Judges states that Israel was in bondage to the Philistines for 40 years (Judges 13:1), during which time Samson judged the land for 20 years (Judges 15:20; 16:31). Eli's judgeship either followed or overlapped Samson's. Eli functioned as judge for 40 years (1 Sam. 4:18). When Eli became so old as to lose control over state affairs, the Philistines may have felt that the time had come for them to secure control of the hill country. Knowing that the center of government was at Shiloh, they would naturally send their army toward it.

Pitched in Aphek. Aphek, "fortress," or "enclosure," is from a verb meaning "to force," "to compel," "to hold." The city has been identified with Antipatris, a town in the Plain of Sharon, about 11 1/4 mi. (18 km.) northeast of Joppa. This would be less than 25 mi. (40 km.) from Shiloh, whence the ark was carried to the battlefield (ch. 4:10, 11). Except for Antipatris, no definite site is known that might be identified with Aphek. Aphek in the tribe of Asher (Joshua 19:30, 31) is too far north to merit consideration. In view of the fact that Aphek means "fortress," the name might have been applied to various fortified sites, either permanent or temporary.

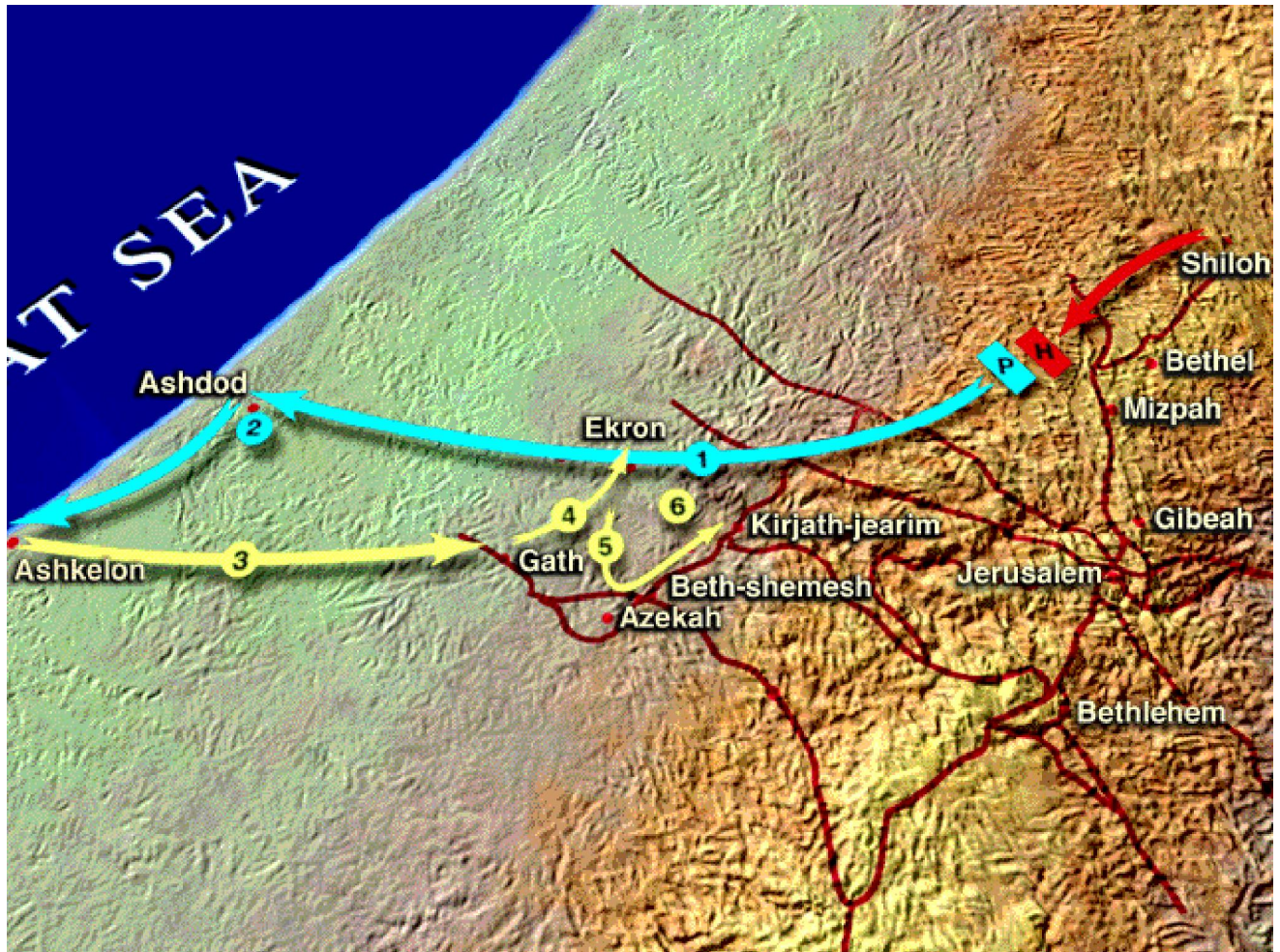
2. Israel was smitten. Upon numerous previous occasions God had directed that the armies of Israel go forth into battle with their enemies, and when they did so in response to His command victory was theirs. This time, however, the circumstances were different. The fact that they carried the ark of the covenant into battle (v. 3) and that the Philistines captured it is evidence that the people of Israel, motivated by a false confidence in their own strength, had initiated the attack and expected an easy victory. They went forth into battle, not in humble faith trusting in God, but with pride in their own cleverness and power. When God was with them no enemy could stand before them; when He was not, defeat was certain.

Capture and Return of the Ark by the Philistines,

1 Samuel 5:3.

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¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Sa 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



3. Wherefore. When reverses came to the polytheistic peoples of the Near East, they usually concluded that their gods were angry with them and should be more earnestly placated to avoid worse afflictions in the future. Considering the low religious condition of Israel at this time, it is little wonder that Israel had much the same attitude toward the Lord (see PP 584). Probably past victories during Eli's judgeship had led to a feeling of self-confidence that blinded their eyes to their need of God. Because the leaders had willfully forsaken Him for the gods of the nations about them, God could do nothing but permit them to reap the harvest of their own seed sowing. Instead of humbling their hearts before God, they gave evidence of their superstitious attitude toward Him by thinking of the ark merely as a talisman guaranteeing success.

Without any counsel from on high the princes suggested, and the people agreed to, something never before thought of. They were only a few miles from the sanctuary, and if the ark were in their midst, surely victory would be theirs. This precious symbol of God's presence was covered with its cloth shroud, and the attendant Levites carried it out from its resting place within the veil (Num. 4:5, 6). Considering the past actions of Eli's sons, one would not be surprised if they forgot all reverent formalities, and hastened the few miles to the army, hoping that further slaughter might be avoided.

But the ark was the symbol of God's presence, and since the leaders had rejected divine direction, God could not place His restraining hand over them for good. Had the

leaders humbled their hearts and turned from their sinful ways, they would have been guided by the prophet, as in later years. In Christ's day crowds followed blindly the leadership of their priests, crying out, "His blood be on us, and on our children." So likewise the army of Israel at Ebenezer, facing disaster, and grasping at the straws of their own imagination, cried out that victory was now assured. The woe or weal of organized groups of society, whether political or religious, is largely determined by the attitude and conduct of the leaders.

Individuals may nevertheless determine their own spiritual destiny independently of the group. Although Samuel shared in the humiliation brought upon Israel as a result of the day's folly, this did not prevent his personal acceptance with God. When, in Ahab's day, the leaders turned to Baal, Elijah felt himself to be the only one who recognized and served the living God. Yet the Lord informed him that there were thousands in Israel who had chosen the right, even as he had done. The three-year drought in Israel had not changed their faith in God and their loyalty to Him.

7. *God is come.* The Philistines, who had many gods, clearly recognized the difference between the God of Israel and their gods. Though in v. 7 the word for God is in the plural, *'Elohim*, the verb is singular. But in v. 8 the verb is plural—a clear contrast between the true God and the gods in their temple at Ashdod.

8. *These mighty Gods.* The word for "mighty" is *'addirim*, "majestic," which implies the additional idea of the nobility of God's power, which had been recognized by the Philistines as they learned of His dealings with various nations and peoples in the past. Almost ready to give up in despair, they were nerved with a bitter determination to resist to the death the fate of being made slaves to those who a few years previously had been slaves to them.

11. *The ark of God was taken.* Speaking of this event, the psalmist says, "He forsook the tabernacle at Shiloh, ... and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand. ... Their priests fell by the sword" (Ps. 78:60–64). Though Israel's prospects for victory were superior to those of the enemy, and though they went into battle confident of victory, they failed so completely that every survivor fled, not to the camp, as in v. 3, but "into his tent." The word for tent is *'ohel*, meaning "dwelling," "habitation," and carries the thought that the defeat was so great that every man had to shift for his own safety, making his way home as best he could.

Hophni and Phinehas. Josephus says that Eli had at this time resigned his high priesthood in favor of Phinehas, but as the ark left Shiloh, he instructed his sons that "if they pretended to survive the taking of the ark, they should come no more into his presence" (*Antiquities* v. 11. 2). Had the two young men been as zealous to follow the guidance of the Lord in days past as they were now to defend the material symbol of His presence before the enemy, the subsequent history of Israel might have been vastly different. They had refused God's guidance again and again, and were now brought to realize that even life itself is dependent on a full surrender to Him. But they learned their lesson too late.

15. *Ninety and eight.* The LXX reads "ninety" (see on ch. 2:22).

17. *Israel is fled.* How different would the history of Israel have been had there only been a leadership that sought the face of God. Still, despite selfish leaders who seek their own glory rather than that of God, and thus open the way for defeat, He does not close

His ears to the cry of any individual who earnestly seeks His face. The fact that Jerusalem was depopulated by Nebuchadnezzar did not prohibit Daniel and his companions from living so close to the Lord as to bring the gospel to many of their captors. Light shines brightest in the darkest night, and the best characters are often developed amid the worst possible environments. God has the power to turn moments of dire humiliation into periods of glorious opportunity, not only for Israel but also for all men.

22. *The glory is departed.* The word “Ichabod” comes from two Hebrew words, *‘i kabod*, meaning literally, “not glorious,” or “inglorious.” It was defined by the wife of Phinehas: “The glory is departed [literally, “gone into exile”] from Israel.” The chapter closes with the description of a young woman who, though married to a wicked and selfish high priest, did not partake of his nature. Her concern for the death of her husband and her father-in-law was evidence of natural affection; but her much greater concern for the loss of the ark was an evidence of her pious devotion to God and sacred things. Even the deaths in the family did not give her the concern the loss of the ark did. Small comfort could she have of a child born in Israel, in Shiloh, when the ark was lost to the Philistines. Living in corrupt times, the wife of an ungodly man, yet truly devout—what greater courage could be known in days of national perplexity?

The presence of God should always be accounted the greatest blessing, and the loss of His presence and restraining power over evil should be dreaded as the direst calamity. The conditions of life are hopeless only when, like Judas, one deliberately refuses to be led by the Holy Spirit.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–22PK 415, 416; PP 583–585

1–9PP 583

1, 2 SR 185

3–11SR 186

9 5T 584

10, 11 PP 514, 583, 591, 622; 1T 119

12–22PP 585; SR 187

17, 18 4T 166, 200, 516

18 1T 119

CHAPTER 5

1 *The Philistines having brought the ark into Ashdod, set it in the house of Dagon. 3 Dagon is smitten down and cut in pieces, and they of Ashdod smitten with emerods. 8 So God dealeth with them of Gath, when it was brought thither: 10 and so with them of Ekron, when it was brought thither.*

1. *The Philistines.* A careful study of Ps. 78:60–64 together with Jer. 7:12; 26:6, 9 indicates that God permitted the Philistines not only to discomfit the people of Israel at Ebenezer but probably also to pursue them northeast to Shiloh. The Philistines left part of their army to guard the prize they had taken from Israel, for it was from the camp of Israel (1 Sam. 5:1) that they started their return journey to the cities of the plain. There is archeological evidence for the destruction of Shiloh about this time. In any case it is believed that the tabernacle services ceased when the ark was taken (see PP 609).

What a fearful responsibility rested on the shoulders of the young man Samuel, with Eli dead and the ark, the very center of religious service, in the hands of the enemy! Even

after the return of the ark, seven months later, it must indeed have been a heavy task for Samuel, traveling from place to place, to encourage the people and prevent the collapse of the religious life of a nation that for centuries had been accustomed to think of Shiloh as the very center of their corporate life. That the Lord “let none of his words fall to the ground” (ch. 3:19) indicates that the people recognized him as the logical successor to Eli, although it was not until 20 years later that Samuel was formally invested with the authority of judge (ch. 7:1–15; see PP 590; 4T 517, 518).

2. *House of Dagon.* One of the chief temples of the Philistines, Dagon being their principal deity. The gods of the heathen were never considered as averse to associating with other gods, and the Philistines may have felt fortunate in honoring Israel’s Deity along with the gods they had known for years. They probably placed the ark by the side of Dagon, planning to offer him a great sacrifice, as they had done years before when Samson was taken captive (Judges 16:23, 24). Then they boasted their triumph over Israel’s champion; now they would exult over the presumed capture of Israel’s God. Some believe that the word translated “Dagon” is related to the Hebrew word *dag*, meaning “fish,” and that the god was shaped like a man above the waist, and like a fish below. In Layard’s *Nineveh* there is a description of a bas-relief from Khorsabad representing a battle between the Assyrians and the inhabitants of the Syrian seacoast. The relief shows a figure, the upper half of which is a bearded man, and the lower half a fish. Others think that the name “Dagon” is derived from *dagan*, meaning “corn,” and therefore that the Philistine deity was a corn god representing fertility. His being half man, half fish would not necessitate his being a sea god.

3. *Fallen.* Prostrate on his face as if in supplication.

4. *And the head.* The second morning Dagon was not only prostrate again, but his head and hands were severed from his body and thrown on the threshold of the temple, where all who entered must tread. Deprived of the emblems of reason and activity, he lay there in his true ugliness, merely a misshapen stump.

5. *Tread on the threshold.* The priests would not step on the threshold, but leaped over it. Could Zephaniah have been thinking of this when he said, “On that day I will punish every one who leaps over the threshold” (Zeph. 1:9, RSV)?

6. *Emerods.* The characteristic symptom of this plague was a painful, tumorlike swelling.

8. *What shall we do?* The discomfiture of Dagon before the ark seemed to create in the hearts of the lords of Philistia a resentment against the God of heaven and a greater allegiance to Dagon. He was still the deity who had given them the victory on the field of battle, and they had done him homage by entrusting the ark to his protection. Even though they admitted he had been worsted in personal conflict, he was still their god, and they refused to surrender to the idea of acknowledging the supremacy of the Creator of all things. An epidemic struck the city which, according to all heathen reasoning, was the work of the supreme Deity, from whom came both good and evil; therefore the only thing to do was to get rid of the offending symbol of God’s presence. But God, who is no respecter of persons, was as anxious that the Philistines recognize the gifts of His providence to them as He was that the Jews do so (see PP 587, 588).

However, convinced against their will, the Philistines were of the same opinion still. So it was with Pharaoh. But it need not have been so. Nebuchadnezzar did not let pride

control him, and, through repeated revelations of God's protective power, came to the place where he turned from his idolatry and worshiped the God of heaven (Dan. 4:24–27, 34, 35). Even as God had shown Pharaoh His restraining power over the plagues, He now demonstrated to the Philistine lords His ability to halt the epidemic that was sweeping through their land. Pride forbade any course of action other than ridding themselves of what to them was the great source of offense—the very thing God intended to be to them a means of salvation.

10. The Ekronites cried out. The selfishness and credulity of the Philistines are illustrated by the fact that each city, in turn, sent the ark on to a neighboring city. Finally, it arrived at Ekron, the northernmost of the five principal cities of Philistia. The cry of that city was one of indignation at having something forced on them without their consent. The word here translated “cried out” is from *za‘aq*, “to cry out in alarm,” whereas in v. 12 the “cry” of the city is from *shawe‘ah*, “a cry for help.”

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–12PP 586

1–4SR 188

CHAPTER 6

1 *After seven months the Philistines take counsel how to send back the ark. 10 They bring it on a new cart with an offering unto Beth-shemesh. 19 The people are smitten for looking into the ark. 21 They send to them of Kirjath-jearim to fetch it.*

2. The priests and the diviners. The ark had been in the land of Philistia for seven months. The inhabitants of the three cities, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron (see ch. 5:5–12), had suffered from a dreadful plague, and the land had been overrun with mice and the crops destroyed (v. 5). Among ancient peoples the mouse was the symbol of pestilence, and so appears in Egyptian hieroglyphics. In their extremity the Philistine lords turned to their wise men. These “diviners” studied natural phenomena and portents. They inspected the entrails of sacrificial animals—the so-called “liver omens” of the Babylonians; they observed the flight of birds, the fall of talismans, the behavior of flowers, etc. It was the responsibility of the astrologers, soothsayers, spirit mediums, and necromancers to separate everything into two classes, the lucky and the unlucky, the good and the evil, portents favorable and unfavorable. The Lord specifically commanded His people not to practice the art of divination (Deut. 18:10–12). Balaam, an apostate prophet of the Lord whom Balak the king of Moab had called to curse Israel, stated that there was no such thing as enchantment or divination against Israel (Num. 23:23). But evidently Saul, influenced by the practices of surrounding peoples, and driven to desperation by the silence of divine counsel, turned to the witch of Endor for help (1 Sam. 28).

What shall we do? Among the nations of the Near East not even the king dared go on a campaign without first consulting his wise men. Among heathen tribes today no one is more respected and feared than the medicine man. It is in perfect harmony with the customs of the time that the lords of the Philistines should counsel with the diviners as to the proper course to pursue.

3. Send it not empty. The answer of the priests and diviners was not merely that the ark be restored, but that it be returned in such a manner as to appease the offended God of Israel and to give proof that He had restrained the plague. The first requisite was a trespass offering of five golden emerods (tumors) and five golden mice. It was a common

custom among heathen nations to attempt to appease the anger of their gods by votive gifts shaped to represent the evils from which they sought deliverance. How different was this from the instructions given to Israel regarding trespass offerings. If a man sinned “through ignorance, in the holy things of the Lord,” he was to bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock from the flock (Lev. 5:14–19). This was in addition to making full monetary compensation for any injury done, which included not only the estimated value of the offense but also a fine of one fifth of the value of the article.

5. Give glory. That is, acknowledge His power to remove these plagues, whatever their cause, and to seek healing from Him. Not all were agreed to the counsel of the priests. Their heathen religion was one of servile, selfish fear; the Philistines were loyal to Dagon, yet afraid of the God of Israel, because of recent occurrences, and were in a quandary as to the way out of their difficulty. They wanted to be rid of the ark, yet pride surged through their hearts because of its capture. It would be showing disrespect to Dagon to give glory to God. Still less willing were they to give up their form of worship, as did Nebuchadnezzar centuries later, when convinced of the superior power of the Creator. Before coming to this final conference they had tried various expedients, such as sending the ark from one town to another.

6. Harden your hearts. The soothsayers found it necessary to warn the people not to rebel against the Lord as the Egyptians had done, since continued resistance to the will of God had only brought increased suffering to themselves and others. Though unwilling to listen at first the people were, after weeks of suffering, constrained to accept the counsel of the wise men. Conviction thus often forces itself upon the most reluctant. As the Holy Spirit could speak through Balaam, so He could give the Philistines wise counsel even through their diviners.

God always speaks to men through ways and means understandable to them. Succeeding events proved that God dealt with the Philistines according to the light they had and not according to the light they had not (see 2 Cor. 8:12).

7. A new cart. Literally, the first part of v. 7 reads, “Now, take you, and make you one new cart, and two milch cattle.” Both verbs deal with both objects. It does not mean that the Philistines were to manufacture a new cart; emphasis is on the fact that it was to be new—never yet used. Similarly the cattle were to be untrained and unbroken to the yoke, a token of never having been put to secular use. This was a mark of reverence. In His triumphal entry to Jerusalem, Christ sat upon a colt “whereon never man sat” (Mark 11:2).

Bring their calves. By separating the calves from their mothers, the diviners hoped to determine, to the satisfaction of all concerned, whether or not the plague was brought by Jehovah. If the God of the Israelites wanted His ark returned, He would have to make the cows do an unnatural thing—leave their calves voluntarily. God was willing to be put to the test by sincerely inquiring minds.

8. In a coffer. The word translated “coffer,” *’argaz*, occurs only this once in the entire OT. *’Argaz* is known to have been a Philistine word for the “box” of a cart. The Philistines had neither uncovered the ark nor looked inside it (PP 589), thus showing greater respect than did the men of the priestly city of Beth-shemesh, who received it back. How many times God must look with great concern on the lack of respect shown by nominal Christians toward sacred things. How many times heathen people put Christians to shame by the attitude they manifest when in the presence of the

supernatural! It seems that the offerings of gold were carefully placed in some kind of purse or bag that could be securely fastened to either the staves by which the ark was carried or the shroud with which it was covered.

9. Beth-shemesh. Literally, “the house of the sun.” There were several Palestinian cities named Beth-shemesh when Israel entered the land. It is thought that one of these, belonging to Issachar (Joshua 19:22, 23), was located on the present site known as *el-Abeidiyeh*, a short distance south of the Sea of Galilee. Another town bearing the same name belonged to the tribe of Naphtali, probably situated north west of the Sea of Galilee (see Joshua 19:38, 39; Judges 1:33). 1 Sam. 6:9 evidently refers to a third city bearing this same name, now *Tell er-Rumeileh*, in the inheritance of Judah (Joshua 15:10, 12), which was set aside as one of the Levitical cities of Judah (Joshua 21:13, 16; 1 Chron. 6:59). It was in the district of the son of Dekar (1 Kings 14:11, 13; 2 Chron. 25:21–23). The fact that so many sites bore this name indicates that the Canaanites were devoted worshipers of the heavenly bodies, in this case the sun. Similarly, Ur of the Chaldees and Haran were centers of moon worship.

Convinced of the supernatural power accompanying the ark, the Philistine diviners arranged for it to be sent to Beth-shemesh, the nearest priestly city of Israel. They reasoned that if the kine, unused to the yoke, left their calves behind and drew the cart directly to this Levitical stronghold, then of a surety the ark, or rather, the God of the ark, was responsible for the plague that had come upon them.

12. The straight way. The statement reads, literally, “straight in the way upon the way to Beth-shemesh; along one highway”—the direct road from Ekron to Beth-shemesh. Only supernatural power would keep the cattle on the main road. The Philistine lords did not drive them, but “went *after* them.” The fact that the cattle had never been yoked (v. 7) is evidence that they had not been over the road before.

What more powerful appeal could be made to the worshipers of Dagon? If, contrary to nature, dumb animals follow an unseen Guide, why should not man, abundantly blessed with the powers of intellect, be able to go contrary to natural pride and national tradition, surrendering to the guidance of Him who could also restrain the plague and the mice? Why had not Balaam seen the angel of the Lord standing in the way as easily as did his ass? Under the hypnotic influence of the evil one, men today see only what Satan wishes them to see, little realizing that close at hand stands One ready and anxious to loose the bonds that bind them fast.

13. Wheat harvest. Since wheat harvest comes in the spring of the year, between the time of Passover and the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, and since the ark had been in the possession of the Philistines for seven months, the battle during which the ark was captured occurred in the fall, about the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. Many may thus have been at Shiloh for the feast and may have assisted in protecting Israel against the invaders. Upon the Philistine victory they would have fled to their own homes among the different tribes (see ch. 4:10).

The people of Beth-shemesh were in the fields reaping their harvest, probably with sickle and rake as in Palestine today. There were no gardens in the town itself. The fields are separated, not by fences, but by small boundary stones or markers. One not familiar with the site could not tell where one field left off and another began.

14. A great stone. In the field of Joshua, probably next to the highway. By the side of this stone the kine stopped. Beth-shemesh was a Levitical city, and her people had both the right and the duty to care for the ark. As there was no tabernacle, the Levites placed the sacred ark, together with the Philistines' trespass offering, on top of the great stone, and offered the kine as a burnt offering to the Lord. Since Beth-shemesh is in the very heart of the Shephelah, or rolling hill country, where the highways run through the heart of the valleys, this stone probably projected from the side of the hill and could easily be approached from above, yet on the lower side be some feet above the road.

16. Returned to Ekron. What an anticlimax for the Philistines They had witnessed the surrender of Dagon to the Lord in the temple at Ashdod. They had witnessed the supernatural guidance of the kine as they sent the ark back to Judah. They were yet to witness the restraining power of God in halting the epidemic and giving them healing. Though satisfied that they had seen strange things that day, they turned and went back to their gods and to their people

18. The great stone of Abel. Literally, "the great Abel upon which they caused the ark of the Lord to rest." The words "stone of" are supplied. Most commentators are of the opinion that the word *'abel* should have been *'eben*, "stone." The word *'abel* is from the verb *'abal*, "to mourn," but also means "stream," "brook," or "meadow." Aside from use in compound names of various cities, such as Abel-bethmaachah (2 Kings 15:29), Abel-maim (2 Chron. 16:4) etc., it appears but once elsewhere. In Judges 11:33 it is translated "the plain of the vineyards," where the RSV translates it "Abel-keramim," as another city name. In the verse under consideration *'abel* is not compounded with any other word, but is qualified by the adjective "great." Inasmuch as vs. 14 and 15 refer to the great *'eben*, "stone," on which the ark was placed, and inasmuch as vs. 17 and 18 recount the memorials of this event, it seems evident that the stone in Joshua's field is simply noted along with these other memorials.

19. Looked into. Both the irreverent touch of the hand and the irreverent prying of the eye were to be visited with serious results (see Num. 4:20). Moses was denied entrance to the land of Canaan because of failure to render strict obedience to the commands of God. Even though they were priests, Nadab and Abihu paid with their lives for their lack of reverence.

Fifty thousand and three score and ten men. Literally, "seventy men, fifty thousand men." In the Hebrew no conjunction "and" occurs here. Contrary to normal Hebrew syntax, the smaller number comes first. The peculiar word sequence makes the text most difficult of translation. Some have suggested, "He smote seventy men; fifty out of a thousand," or, "He slew seventy men out of fifty thousand men." Three reputable Hebrew manuscripts omit the words "fifty thousand." In Judges 6:15 *'eleph*, "thousand," is translated "family." It is possible that it should be translated "family" here also. If so, the statement would read, "And he smote among the people 70 men of 50 families." Most commentators agree that only 70 men of Beth-shemesh were slain. Yet in a city as small as Beth-shemesh even this would be a terrible calamity. Of course, the Philistines would hear of it, and would have one more evidence that God honored their refusal to look into the ark and their reverence for it.

21. Kirjath-jearim. Literally, “the city of forests.” This was one of the cities of Gibeon that sought the protection of Joshua after the destruction of Jericho (Joshua 9:17). It was listed in the inheritance of Judah (Joshua 15:9). It is situated on the western slopes of the mountains near Jerusalem, about 9 mi. (14.4 km.) from Beth-shemesh. The message to the city of Kirjath-jearim implies the feeling that the farther the ark was removed from the Philistines, the safer it would be. Kirjath-jearim, higher in the mountains, could be more easily defended against attack than a city in the lower, rolling hill country.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–21PP 586–589; SR 188–191

1 PP 586

2 PP 588

2–4PP 587

7–12SR 189

7–14PP 588

13, 14 PP 589

19 MH 436

19, 20 8T 283

19–21PP 589

20, 21 SR 191

CHAPTER 7

1 *They of Kirjath-jearim bring the ark into the house of Abinadab, and sanctify Eleazar his son to keep it.* 2 *After twenty years* 3 *the Israelites, by Samuel’s means, solemnly repent at Mizpeh.* 7 *While Samuel prayeth and sacrificeth, the Lord discomfith the Philistines by thunder at Eben-ezer.* 13 *The Philistines are subdued.* 15 *Samuel peaceably and religiously judgeth Israel.*

1. Abinadab. The word Abinadab means “my father is noble,” or “my father is generous.” The verb from which it comes is *nadab*, “to incite,” “to impel,” always in a good sense, and therefore “to be willing,” “to volunteer.” His genealogy is not known, but he must have been a Levite closely akin to Aaron in order to appoint his son Eleazar as keeper of the ark. Aaron’s eldest son was named Nadab (Num. 3:2), and it would be expected that one of his direct descendants should bear the name Abinadab.

In the hill. Heb. *baggibe’ah*. Translated, “in Gibeah,” in 2 Sam. 6:3, and “at Gibeah” in v. 4. The context must determine whether the word is used as the name of a place or whether the word simply refers to a “hill,” as it is uniformly translated elsewhere in the OT. There was, as well, a Gibeah of Benjamin (1 Sam. 13:16), or “Gibeah of Saul” (ch. 11:4). There was also a hill, literally, “Gibeah” of Phinehas, in the mountain of Ephraim (Joshua 24:33). The Gibeonites were, literally, “hill dwellers,” and inasmuch as Kirjath-jearim was one of the four cities as belonging to them (Joshua 9:17), the “Gibeah” where Abinadab dwelt would best be described as a hill at, or near, Kirjath-jearim.

Judging from the action of the kine, one would conclude that Beth-shemesh was the logical place for the ark to rest, but that the unholy curiosity of the people and the fright of those who survived the retribution, indicate that its people were not qualified for the reverent guardianship of the sacred symbol of God’s presence. Less than 10 mi. away were the men of Kirjath-jearim, whose reputation justified the belief that they could

convey and safely keep that which their neighbors did not want. How many times Israel hindered God in the accomplishment of His purpose by refusing to respect His counsel and to fit into His plan! Christ loved Judas and would have liked to make him one of the leaders of the apostles, but Judas refused (see DA 295). Christ also loved the rich young man who inquired of the way to the kingdom, but in spite of the invitation to follow Christ the youth went away sorrowful.

2. *The time was long.* It took 20 years for Israel to recognize that it was not God who had deserted them but that they, by sowing seeds of selfishness and rebellion, had deserted Him and thus reaped a bitter harvest of suffering. There once had been the need of workmen to build the ark of God, and men were found ready for the task when God outlined the plan. There were men needed to bear the ark on its various journeys, and the willingness of the Levites to assist Moses at Sinai provided such bearers. When Israel failed in their responsibilities, and the ark fell into the hands of idolaters, help was needed to bring it back. Men failed, yet the beasts of the field were obedient to God's direction. Near at hand were those to carry and keep it in all reverence and order. Why were they not ready for the responsibility? No hint of their background or genealogy is given upon which to base conclusions. All that is recorded is that it took 20 years before Israel learned that idolatry did not pay, and turned to Samuel in repentance. The ark remained in the house of Abinadab for the period of Samuel's judgeship during the reign of Saul, and for the early part of David's reign, while a place was made ready for it at Jerusalem. How patiently God waits.

3. *The strange gods and Ashtaroth.* A phrase used to represent the various gods and goddesses that the Israelites served when they forsook the Lord. Ashtoreth (plural, Ashtaroth) was associated with the Phoenician, or Canaanite, Baals; for she was the chief female deity of the Canaanites (see Judges 2:13).

She was believed to represent the reproductive powers of nature. Her worship usually consisted of lewd orgies, fostered many times by leading women who became her devotees and were known as "sacred women," or temple prostitutes. Figurines of Canaanite gods and goddesses were doubtless in many Israelite homes. Gradually the people of Israel had fallen under the sway and control of the people of the plain, for they had both business (1 Sam. 13:19) and social intercourse (Judges 14) with them. The fact that Israel left the ark in Kirjath-jearim for many years, and made no attempt to restore the temple service or to provide a proper resting place for the ark, shows how far they had departed from the Lord. History records no deportation of Israelites to the coastal plains similar to the later deportations to Assyria and Babylon, yet Israel must have associated with the Philistines in almost every phase of living, serving them (1 Sam. 4:9), paying yearly tribute with various kinds of produce, and delighting themselves in the orgies of the high places so common throughout the land. The restoration of the ark in nowise signified that the Philistines relinquished their hold on the conquered Israelites.

Samuel now appears in the narrative for the first time since the battle at Aphek, in the role of a reformer attempting to turn a selfish and idolatrous people back to God. Only the imagination can picture what these years had meant to him as he wandered from place to place. Not only did he visit the districts adjoining Philistia; all Israel heard his pleadings, warnings, and prayers, until slowly but surely a sense of their sin and of the need of renewed trust in God took possession of the entire nation. He graphically portrayed their present condition in comparison with what God had planned for them, and

promised deliverance from the Philistines if they would only become true Israelites—literally, “governed by God.” Samuel knew that if the people forsook their idolatry and refused to serve the Philistine gods, this would be interpreted as equivalent to rebellion against Philistine supremacy, and of course meant war. But Samuel had confidence in God’s promises and went forward to inspire a forlorn people with hope.

4. *Baalim and Ashtaroeth.* The Baals and Ashtoreths (see on Judges 2:11, 13).

Served the Lord only. Israel had been in bondage to the Philistines for 40 years during the days of Samson and Eli, and now after Eli’s death they halted between two opinions for another 20 years. The repentant people hardly knew what step to take next, so long had they been under the sway of idolatry. The ark was gone from the tabernacle, and the tabernacle service itself had been discontinued (see PP 609). There were no yearly festivals at which the worshipers might receive instruction. Practically a new generation had appeared since the ark was taken. The people of Israel were like sheep lost on the mountainside. They realized they were lost, but how to get back to the fold they knew not. In anticipation of the time when His people would wish to turn from their evil ways, God prepared a faithful undershepherd to hunt for the lost and bring them back home. As God had planned, in their anxiety Israel now turned to Samuel.

One of the greatest encouragements the Christian has is the assurance that God is never caught unprepared, whatever the circumstances may be. To Him who knows the end from the beginning there is neither haste nor delay. What would have happened to Israel at this time had there been no Samuel? What would have happened to Israel in Egypt had there been no Moses? How would Nebuchadnezzar have been instructed in the ways of God had there been no Daniel? Throughout history, whenever a crisis has arisen demanding action, a leader has been at hand, well trained for the task. This does not necessarily mean that the leader was always all that the Lord might desire. Many are called but few are chosen, because, like Samson, many refuse to heed the instructions God sends them. Jeremiah was certainly trained for a special work, and fulfilled his role well, yet Israel suffered fearfully because Jehoiakim, the king, refused to heed the counsel Jeremiah gave him. For both nations and individuals the great question in the day of judgment will be, “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?” (Isa. 5:4).

5. *Mizpeh.* Or, Mizpah. The word means “lookout point.” In Hebrew a *mizpeh* was a “watch-tower,” and is so translated in Isa. 21:8. The two spellings are used interchangeably even when referring to the same site. Samuel’s Mizpah was for years thought (and is still thought by some) to be the modern *Nebi Samwīl*, 5 mi. (8 km.) northwest of Jerusalem, but excavation at that site has not been possible because a tomb there is sacred to the Arabs as the traditional burial place of Samuel. However, excavations tend to support the identification of Mizpah with the modern *Tell en-Naṣbeh*, 7 1/2 mi. (12.2 km.) north of Jerusalem on the main road to Samaria.

6. *Drew water, and poured it.* Commentators are not agreed as to the meaning of this text. Some think it has reference to Israel’s sorrow for their sin upon recognizing that except for the power of God they would be like water spilled on the ground (2 Sam. 14:14). Others suggest that these words refer to the water and wine poured out by the priest on the high day of the Feast of Tabernacles, representing the joy with which they drew water out of the wells of salvation (Isa. 12:2, 3. The Feast of Tabernacles was a

memorial of God's protecting care over Israel during the Exodus, when from the smitten rock there flowed an abundance of water.

Referring later to this incident in the wilderness, Christ declared, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). Perhaps the true meaning is found in a combination of the two ideas. Christ was certainly "poured out like water" (Ps. 22:14), that salvation might be made possible. In pouring out this libation at Mizpah, Israel expressed recognition of their own unworthiness and solemnly rejoiced in their new-found trust in a heavenly Father, who, in spite of their spiritual wandering, was willing to receive them with open arms.

Judged. This was the beginning of Samuel's long judgeship.

7. The Philistines went up. Once they had determined on a definite break with idolatry, the people gathered at Mizpah. The lords of the Philistines recognized this to be tantamount to a declaration of independence, and hastened to forestall any attempt on the part of the Israelites to act accordingly. The Philistines attacked with such speed that the Israelites, assembled from various parts of the country with peaceful intentions, were compelled to meet them, unprepared for warfare. The only way out was through prayer.

8. Cease not to cry. Literally, "Do thou not be silent from calling." There come moments of testing to all men, each in his own sphere of activity. To Samuel it was a test, first as to whether he would wait for the Lord to lead, and second, whether the people would trust in the Lord rather than run in terror from the advancing hosts. To the people it was as severe a test, for, having given up their idols whom they had served all these years, they wondered whether this prophet, who had visited them time after time, would vouchsafe victory to them. Theirs was to be a practical demonstration of Jehoshaphat's statement: "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper" (2 Chron. 20:20).

9. Heard. Literally, "answered." *Anah* is a common verb, translated into English in a variety of ways, but with the fundamental meaning "to answer." On God's part it often involves a visible answer, as in ch. 28:15, when Saul complained to the spirit brought up by the witch at Endor that God would no longer hear or answer him.

10. The Lord thundered. In this case God's answer (see Ps. 99:6) came as a thunderstorm. For other instances of God's miraculous use of the forces of nature, see on 1 Sam. 14:15. Having renounced their idols and confessed their departure from the Lord, in humiliation of spirit, they were to witness how readily God took them back under His protection, and demonstrated a heavenly Father's love for the returning prodigal. God neither expressed bitterness nor held aloof until His people, through years of sacrificial humility, had demonstrated their change of attitude. Immediately He spread over them His protecting arm. Well could they afford to make this place a memorial of God's everlasting devotion and loving watchcare and of His power to protect and deliver.

11. Beth-car. The location is uncertain, but it is thought by some to be the modern 'Ain Kārim, about 4 1/4 mi. (6.7 km.) west of Jerusalem. This has been the general opinion, but more recently it has been identified with *Ramath-Rahel*, 2.9 mi. (4.6 km.) south of Jerusalem. It may be that the thunderstorm came from the north, and inasmuch as Baal was considered a storm god, the Philistines would superstitiously flee from a god whose dwelling was supposed to be in the mountains of the north. Fleeing southward, the Philistines probably took the easiest road back to the plain country, which would lead

them through Beth-shemesh to Ekron. Along the way they were harassed by the assembled Israelites. And there, as Isaiah declared centuries later, God graciously gave them at once “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning” (Isa. 61:3).

12. *Eben-ezer.* Literally, *’eben ha’ezer*, “the stone of the help,” referring definitely to the providential deliverance just mentioned. As the help had been specific, so the memorial was to be of a definite and permanent form. The fact that God upon this occasion delivered them from the enemy was only an earnest of future providences. Samuel wished Israel to understand that the Lord’s help was theirs only as from day to day they obeyed Him, and not once for all, irrespective of their attitude. It is well for the Christian to go back constantly to the Ebenezers of life, where providential deliverances came to crown distrust of self, a full surrender, and trust in God.

13. *The hand of the Lord.* The same providential incident may bring both favor and disfavor; favor to those who surrender to the guiding hand of the Lord and disfavor to those who choose to serve self. The same storm brought victory to the helpless Israelites and defeat to the Philistines, who trusted in the strength of false gods and the prowess of their own arms. The same pillar of God’s presence that shed light to the armies of the Lord wrapped the Egyptian hosts in darkness. Perhaps the Philistines concluded that Baal, the storm god (see p. 40), was now fighting against them and for the armies of Israel. But the Israelites, because of their renewed relation to God, could take advantage of the traditional heathen viewpoint and follow up to the utmost the victory over the enemy.

So it was then; so it is today. Man comes to the place where he recognizes that his life is most unsatisfactory. He finds himself attached to his idols, whatever they may be. He senses the uselessness of past habits cultivated, past motives cherished, past desires gratified. He is attracted to the fellowship he sees others enjoying with God, such as Israel saw in Samuel during those 20 years. He renounces his past life, and confesses his inability to transform himself by his own efforts. He then surrenders to the Holy Spirit and finds created within himself a self-control, an acceptance of such spiritual helps as God wisely gives to fit him for a higher life than he has yet known. Past failures thus become steppingstones. Valleys of Achor become doors of hope (Hosea 2:15).

15. *Samuel judged Israel.* More talents were given to the man who had already traded successfully with those allotted to him. Little did Samuel dream of the responsibility to be placed on his shoulders when first he came to Shiloh. Nor did Peter dream, when he left Bethsaida to visit John at Bethabara, that he would one day become a fisher of men. How much less did he dream that one day he would sit with Christ on the throne of the universe!

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–17PP 589–591; SR 191

1, 2 PP 589, 593

3 4T 517

5–10PP 590

6, 8 4T 517

10 4T 518

11, 12 PP 591

12 SC 130; 2T 274

15 PP 663

CHAPTER 8

1 *By occasion of the ill government of Samuel's sons, the Israelites ask a king. 6 Samuel praying in grief, is comforted by God: 10 He telleth the manner of a king. 19 God willeth Samuel to yield unto the importunity of the people.*

1. Made his sons judges. In harmony with ch. 7:15, this statement must be understood as meaning that, upon reaching the age when he was no longer able to visit all parts of the country, he appointed his sons as assistants, placing them in Beersheba, one of the southernmost towns in the district belonging to Judah. They were never judges in their own right.

2. Joel. The names of Joel, "Jehovah is God," and Abiah, "Jehovah is my father," are indicative of Samuel's continued delight in serving God, in spite of nationwide idolatry. The statement in 1 Chron. 6:28 naming "Vashni" as Samuel's first-born should read, "And the sons of Samuel; the firstborn, and the second, even Abiah." Joel's name is missing, but the text states plainly that there were two children and that the second was Abiah. The RSV supplies the name Joel before the word "first-born," in harmony with v. 33, and gives the Hebrew expression *washeni* as "the second." The plan of appointing lieutenants to administer certain districts under the authority of the chief judge was also followed by Jair, long before the days of Samuel (Judges 10:4).

4. Elders. Heb. *zaqan*, from a root of uncertain meaning, another of whose derivatives means "chin," or "beard." "Elders" were men of mature age who held positions of authority. Samuel organized the tribes with responsible leaders in every place, who reported to the local "judge" serving under Samuel. These leaders had seen enough of the conduct of Samuel's sons to warrant their going directly to Samuel himself.

5. Walk not in thy ways. The elders' confidence in Samuel was so great that they knew him to be in no way responsible for the wickedness of his sons. It would be better, they reasoned, to take the matter to Samuel for solution than to wait for the confusion that was sure to result after his death, when the sons would likely attempt to assert their own authority.

Make us a king. God had said through Moses that the time would come when the people would ask for a king "like as all the nations" (Deut. 17:14). Perhaps the elders were virtually quoting this text as an excuse for their request. It was evidently God's plan that Israel should be distinct from surrounding nations, and through the centuries since the Exodus He had accordingly protected and guided them by judges. Had they entered into God's plan for them, Moses told them, the nations looking on would say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deut. 4:6). Relying on the diplomacy of which the Oriental is capable, they now, in opposition to the will of God and without seeking His counsel, made known their shortsighted decision. At first they stated merely that they wanted a king to judge them after the fashion of the world; but when Samuel tried to warn them of the curse they were about to bring upon themselves, they added a second reason, "that our king, may ... go out before us, and fight our battles" (1 Sam. 8:20). Clarification of the circumstances under which the elders of Israel appealed for a king is given in ch. 12:12: "When ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over

us.” Josephus confirms the idea that Nahash had been afflicting the Jews beyond Jordan for some time, reducing their cities to slavery and putting out the right eyes of his captives in order that they might be useless in future warfare (*Antiquities* vi. 5. 1)

Archeological discoveries in both Palestine and Transjordan also point to the fact that in the preceding century all the nations in this district had begun to fortify their cities and to put themselves in a position to resist the hordes of migratory Sea Peoples from the Aegean region (see p. 33), who were advancing against Egypt by both land and sea. Part of this migratory wave moved through Asia Minor, obliterated the Hittites, and then swept on southward through Syria and Palestine toward Egypt. Defeated by Ramses III, some settled in the Philistine plain. Other nations were watching the political horizon with fear and trembling, and it was not strange that the leaders of Israel felt vital concern over the national policy and leadership.

God sought to demonstrate a unique method of coping with international problems, but Israel saw no way out other than to copy the nations about them. For centuries they had been a seminomadic people, living mostly in tents; they had failed to drive the native inhabitants of Canaan from their cities (Judges 1:27–36). Nevertheless, in the years between 1200 and 1050 B.C. they settled increasingly in towns. Now, in perversity of mind they saw nothing to do but to consolidate their government and fortify themselves against the invaders.

Years before, the Ammonites charged Israel with taking their patrimony from them (Judges 11:13–27). That had been in Jephthah’s day, when the 18-year Ammonite oppression was brought to a close. Now, the Ammonites were making their second attempt to regain this territory from Israel.

6. *Samuel prayed.* Israel again proceeded to do precisely what they had done for centuries—move without awaiting divine guidance. They had been warned against drifting into idolatry, but they preferred to follow the ways of the nations about them rather than the directions of the Lord. Moses had foretold that the time would come when Israel would ask for a king, in order to be like the nations about them (Deut. 17:14), and now they were literally fulfilling this prophecy. Although the elders were probably moved solely by political motives, Samuel showed them the better way—seeking the Lord in prayer. They had undervalued their high religious privileges and had not realized that the nation’s real need was not a new power but a permanent organization of the theocracy to meet the confusion that resulted from their own restlessness and perversity.

They were unwilling to submit the case to God to know His will, and Samuel exercised his official prerogative by insisting that they leave the decision in so weighty a matter to the Lord, who had always been ready to deliver them in times of perplexity. Deeply as Samuel must have been hurt by such a demand on the part of the people, he made available to them his services as prophet, as faithfully when the question was one injurious to himself as upon more pleasant occasions. His attitude seems to have been much the same as that of Christ centuries later when He cried, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34), and of John as he said concerning Christ, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

7. *Hearken unto.* Here is the best evidence possible that nations as well as individuals are free moral agents. Had they come seeking His counsel, God would have given it; when they came with an ultimatum, He accepted their choice.

They have rejected me. Under the judges Israel experienced numerous advantages that would be lost under the rule of kings. For example:

1. Under the judges God had made each tribe virtually independent. Taxes were extremely low. Although the tribes worked together as allies, “there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). This was, of course, not an unmixed blessing (see Deut. 12:8). But the elders rejected the independence of a tribal confederacy, and chose instead an authoritarian form of government that within a few decades brought with it exorbitant taxation.

2. God had given every Israelite considerable individual freedom in earning a livelihood, in choosing his own form of worship, and in administering his own affairs in general. But the elders rejected this freedom for serfdom under a king who exercised the power of life and death over his subjects, and who could execute those who disagreed with him.

3. For several centuries the Spirit of the Lord came upon men in the various tribes, under whose leadership Israel enjoyed rest and a measure of peace and security in which to pursue their chosen vocations. There was no such thing as hereditary succession; judges were raised up by God from time to time, on the basis of personal qualifications. But now the elders rejected such divine assistance and chose a hereditary monarchy.

4. Over and over again when Israel had sought the Lord for counsel. He miraculously protected them from the attacks of the enemy (see 1 Sam. 7:10; Joshua 10:11; etc.). In their rejection of God as supreme Lord of the theocracy the elders were, in reality, opening the way whereby Israel became the pawn of international intrigue. They demanded tribute from their defeated foes and gloried in their martial prowess. In turn, they fell under the domination of more powerful nations. They wrongly attributed their military reverses and periods of oppression to the form of government rather than to their own evil course of action.

5. It was God’s plan to change valleys of Achor into doors of hope when His people turned in surrender to Him (Hosea 2:15). Under God’s guidance mistakes could become steppingstones to a greater knowledge of God and His plan of salvation.

6. God had scattered the Levites throughout the tribes that the children might be educated, particularly in the things of God. On account of their selfish unwillingness to carry out this plan, Israel failed to support the Levites and remained in illiteracy and ignorance. The majority of the people did not wish to be trained to think for themselves. They were perfectly content to let their leaders do their thinking for them, so long as these leaders did not demand their possessions or disturb their selfish ease.

From the time the great controversy began in heaven (Rev. 12:7–9), down to the present day, God’s great plan for the universe has been misunderstood by some of the beings He created. Professing themselves to be wise, they questioned the reliability and desirability of His guidance and set out to follow what, in their ignorance, appeared to be a better course—only to find they had entered upon a dead-end road. God has always permitted opportunity for men to prove His ways to be best. But He sometimes yields to their wishes and permits them to pursue the course of their own choosing, in order that their failures, though severe, may finally lead them to bow the knee and acknowledge the superiority of God’s eternal plan (see Phil. 2:10, 11; PP 605, 606).

9. *Protest solemnly.* Literally, “protesting, thou shalt protest unto them,” or better, “warning, thou shalt warn them.” As a free moral agent man must decide, from the

evidence at hand, what it is he wishes to do with himself. He has two ways of obtaining this evidence—by a careful study of the counsels, statutes, and judgments of God as applicable to his case, and by experimentation with other suggestions in an endeavor to satisfy himself as to their value. A parent may say, “Son, you’re making a mistake. If you feel you must go the way you propose, you will have to abide the consequences.” But, after warning against the proposed move, God virtually says, “If you feel that is the right thing for you to do, try it out. Even though I know your plan will not succeed, you must learn from your own experience that it will not work. Only then will you be satisfied to follow My counsel.” Thus Samuel was instructed to warn Israel as to the outcome of their plan; nevertheless God would go with them and help them make it a success. Study carefully Ps. 139, especially vs. 7–13, in this connection.

11. The manner of the king. Literally, “the judgment of the king.” The word *mishpat*, “judgment,” describes the act, or decision, of the *shophet*, “judge.” The decision of the king is to be accepted as legal and binding. If he feels the need of assistance in the carrying out of his responsibilities, he has the right to commandeer it, whether for civil or for military duty.

13. Confectioneries. Literally, “spice mixers,” or “perfumers” (RSV). 1 Chron. 9:30 uses the words from the same root in referring to the work of certain sons of the priests who “made the ointment of the the spices.” Samuel might also have mentioned the fact that many of their daughters would enter the king’s harem as concubines (1 Kings 11:3).

14. To his servants. Literally, “slaves.” The same word is used in speaking of Egypt as a “house of bondage” (Ex. 13:3; Deut. 5:6; etc.). The king had the power of life or death over his subjects, and in, most of the nations of the Near East the people existed primarily for the benefit of the king, who could do with them as he wished. Not only did the people supply the needs of the king’s household, but they provided him with means by which to enrich his favorites, whether wives and concubines or civil and military officers.

18. Will not hear. Literally, “will not answer.” The verb *‘anah* appears 35 times in 1 Samuel, and is only twice translated “to hear,” in this instance and in ch. 7:9. In the latter instance God answered Samuel’s plea by a thunderstorm. In the present text it is not the thought that God is unable to hear, but rather unable to answer because of Israel’s willful rejection of Him. All this is completely in harmony with the context, for ch. 8:7 affirms that it is not God who planned a change in the government, but the leaders in Israel. Therefore when they later became dissatisfied with conditions they were to remember that in requesting a king they had set in motion a new regime that was certain to change their way of life materially. New temptations, new relationships, new problems, would all affect the nation. They had by their own choice sowed the seeds of obstinacy, and in so doing had placed the Lord in a position where it was necessary for Him to let this seed produce its own harvest. He would not interfere with the universal law that seed sown produces a harvest after its kind.

Thus God often permits man to have that of which He does not Himself approve. He grants that which He has previously, in mercy, withheld. In questioning God’s word Adam brought into existence a new regime, which must run its course to demonstrate to the full satisfaction of men and angels that no other plan than that ordained by God can bring life and happiness to all. Future events in the history of Israel show that though God often permitted Israel to reap the harvest they had sown, He never forsook them. He was

ever with them, ready to help. Furthermore, the prophets testify that in the midst of such an environment any individual who so chooses may turn from the ways of the multitude to be guided by the Lord (see Eze. 18:1–24).

20. Like all the nations. During their residence in Palestine, the Israelites had witnessed the concerted efforts of the Sea Peoples and other nations to conquer all the lands of the Near East, overcoming all resistance and spreading fear to every heart. But Israel knew nothing of the fear that had made the blood of the Canaanites run cold as Joshua led God’s people in the conquest of Palestine (see Joshua 2:9–11). Foolishly, their elders believed the tribute levied on conquered peoples would make Israel rich. They forgot that true riches come through a better way of life. Disgusted with the greed and graft of priestly leaders such as the sons of Eli and of Samuel, they thought the solution rested in submitting to the judgment of one king, such as the other nations had. They were oblivious of the fact that a king would find even more opportunities for favoritism and the gratification of selfish desires than had the dissolute priests.

At the beginning of his judgeship Samuel had shown the people that the real solution of their troubles was not a change of administration but rather a change of heart, a contrite turning to the Lord.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–22PP 603–607

3–5PP 604

5 Ed 50; 6T 249

7, 8 PP 605

10–18PP 606

19, 20 PP 607

20 PP 614

22 PP 607

CHAPTER 9

1 *Saul despairing to find his father’s asses, 6 by the counsel of his servant, 11 and direction of young maidens, 15 according to God’s revelation, 18 cometh to Samuel. 19 Samuel entertaineth Saul at the feast. 25 Samuel, after secret communication, bringeth Saul on his way.*

1. Kish. According to Gesenius the word transliterated Kish is from *qosh*, “to lay lay a snare,” or “to set a trap” (see Isa. 29:21). A related Arabic word means “to be bent as a bow.” If Kish be taken to mean “bow,” then Kishi (1 Chron. 6:44) would mean “my bow” (see also the name Elkoshite in Nahum 1:1, from *’elkoshi*, “God is my bow”). Sometimes the name was compounded with that of the Deity as Kushaiah, “the bow of God” (1 Chron. 15:17). The father of Kish was Abiel, “God is my father,” and his grandfather’s name was Zeror, “bound together.” The same root word is used in 1 Sam. 25:29–31, where Abigail pleads with David to forgive Nabal’s trespass against him. Zeror’s father was Bechorath, from *bekor*, “first-born,” and his grandfather’s name as Aphiah, of uncertain meaning. Thus the ancestry of Saul is traced for more than a century.

Son of Abiel. See on ch. 14:50.

2. Saul. Heb. *sha'ul*, from the verb *sha'al*, “to ask for,” “to request.” One of the dukes of Edom also bore the name Saul (Gen. 36:37, 38). If Kish be thought of as “the bow of God” (see on 1 Sam. 9:1), for delivering Israel from the hand of the surrounding nations, there must also be arrows for His quiver. Zechariah speaks of Judah as God’s bow and Ephraim as is arrows; Zion is “as the sword of a mighty man” (Zech. 9:13).

Towering head and shoulders above his fellows, Saul had a regal bearing that won him the favor of the multitude. What better lesson could God give those who wished to be like the nations about them than to select for them a king who should be judged after man’s standards? Thus the disciples of Jesus looked to Judas as a leader, little knowing the darkness that shrouded his heart. Is it not time for God’s people today to ask for that heavenly eyesalve that will enable them ever to discern clearly the qualifications of true leadership?

3. The asses. On what apparently inconsequential incidents does the destiny of races and peoples does the destiny of races and peoples often depend! Saul set out to find the lost asses (Heb., “she-asses”), little dreaming that the day had come for him to assume the responsibilities of a kingdom! Future events proved him ill-prepared for the task to which God called him. Few people are prepared for such leadership. Moses was not fully prepared for leadership even when he met God at the burning bush. But the encouraging aspect of a call to leadership is that God takes men as He finds them, with the purpose of training them as they work. All that God expects of any man is “to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly” with his God (Micah 6:8); literally, “to humble thyself to walk with God.” Peter did this; Judas did not. David did so; Saul refused. It is not that God cannot train man, but rather that man will not humble his heart before God so that in due time God may exalt him (1 Peter 5:6).

4. Mount Ephraim. Approached from either the valley of the Jordan or the rolling hills of the Shephelah to the west, Mt. Ephraim loomed ahead, the central mountain range that ran north from the environs of Bethel toward Salim, a few miles east of Shechem. These mountains formed a watershed some 2,500–3,000 ft. above sea level, from which streams ran east to the Jordan and west to the Mediterranean.

Land of Shalisha. Nothing is known as to the location of the “land of Shalisha.” Some have suggested that it was in the western foothills, to the northwest of Bethel; others think it may have been in the Jordan valley to the northwest of Jericho.

Shalim. Or, Shual (ch. 13:17), from *shu'al*, “fox,” or “jackal,” or from *sho'al*, “hollow of the hand.” The district of Shalim was probably thought of as a land of jackals. The eastern slopes of the mountains of central Palestine were for the most part wild, rugged, and desolate, and chiefly the habitat of wild animals.

After traversing the districts mentioned, on the third day of search Saul and his servant came to Ramah, about 6 mi. north of Gibeah (v. 20; see on ch. 1:1). The animals had been lost but two full days (ch. 9:20; see p. 136), and could have wandered no more than a few miles from home. In his search for the lost asses Saul would have investigated all the hills, valleys, and ravines, and would have stopped here and there to inquire concerning the animals. The area thus covered in two or three days would obviously be of limited extent. It is therefore probable that Saul and his servant were never far from Gibeah and Bethel, in northern Benjamin and southern Ephraim. According to ch. 13:17, “the land of Shual” lay in the vicinity of Ophrah, about 5 mi. to the northeast of Bethel. He did not make a thorough search of all the regions named, but only of those parts

where the asses may conceivably parts where the asses may conceivably have strayed. During the two days or more he had been away from home he may easily have traveled 30 or 40 mi. by the time he met Samuel, including side trips to the tops of hills and down into valleys and ravines.

5. *The land of Zuph.* See on ch. 1:1.

6. *This city.* That is, Ramah, the home of Samuel (PP 608–610; see on ch. 1:1).

11. *Up the hill.* Naturally the asses would not be in the towns. Saul and his servant would be looking for them in the fields, where the people had their gardens, or in the open countryside.

14. *Came out against them.* Or, “came out toward them”; possibly, “came out to call them.” Each of these translations is possible, according to the Hebrew text and also the context.

16. *I will send.* This gives the background of v. 14. A careful study of the preceding verses indicates that Saul was not sure of the propriety of coming to the seer without a gift, and that it took some persuading on the part of the servant before he consented to go into the city. This illustrates the guiding of the Holy Spirit, whereby men in perplexity are brought into contact with those who can give them assistance. In a similar way Ruth was providentially guided to the field of Boaz (Ruth 2:3), and Philip was directed to the eunuch on his way from Jerusalem to Ethiopia (Acts 8:26–29). It is a sacred privilege to be so fully surrendered to the control of the Holy Spirit that He can guide us, even as he guided Samuel, to those souls who need our help.

18. *In the gate.* Having already been instructed by the Lord, and remembering the time of day the message came to him, Samuel perhaps set out to find the young man of whom the Lord had spoken. The two met “in the gate,” the place where the elders sat and gave counsel, or assisted the stranger in finding his way. Here Samuel could expect to secure information concerning any stranger who might have come to the town. The timing was exact. Before Saul spoke, Samuel knew that he was the man of whom the Lord had told him the previous day (v. 17). What a thrill it must have given Samuel to realize that he was being led by God, whom he had served faithfully for so many years. Is there any reason why one may not experience that same thrill today if he will surrender himself to God as completely as Samuel did? Verses 18, 19 are perhaps a detailed explanation of v. 14.

20. *They are found.* Samuel states that the asses had been lost for three days, literally, “today, three days.” Before telling Saul of his high calling, Samuel put his mind at rest concerning the practical purpose of his visit. Christ always ministered to the physical needs of His hearers as well as to their spiritual yearnings. The very fact that He was interested in their physical welfare did much to cause them to listen while He ministered to their spiritual needs. Thus the information that the asses were found did much to convince Saul of the divine origin of Samuel’s message concerning the kingdom.

The desire of Israel. Though himself a prophet and a judge, Samuel accepted the counsel of the Lord that Israel be granted the desire of their hearts. He expressed no feelings of regret or jealousy at meeting the young man who was to take over the responsibility of delivering Israel from the hand of the Philistines (v. 16). Instead, he accorded Saul evidences of honor and respect (see vs. 20–24). Here Samuel demonstrated the true spirit of unselfishness. Like Moses, he was anxious that the Spirit of the Lord come upon all men (Num. 11:29). Christ did not count equality with God the Father a

thing to be grasped after, but manifested the true principle of selflessness, in order that the overcome might sit with Him on His throne (Rev. 3:21). Similarly, Samuel not only indicated that he was willing to give Saul the responsibility, but also that he would do all in his power to prepare the future king for his duties.

22. The parlour. Meaning the room attached to the high place where the sacrificial meal was eaten. Saul and his servant were ushered to the seats of honor in this room, with some 30 of the elders present. Saul had been persistent in the work of finding his father's asses, and perhaps the elders, as they looked upon him and heard his story, felt that here was a man who could as persistently find a way of deliverance from the hostilities of the Philistines.

24. The shoulder. The feast to which Saul had been invited was evidently a sacrifice of peace offerings in which the elders of Ramah took part (see Vol. I, p. 700, and on Lev. 3:1). Such sacrifices were made by the children of Israel at Sinai when they ratified the covenant (Ex. 24:4-8). At this sacrifice the breast and the right "shoulder" (or thigh) belonged to the officiating priest (Lev. 7:33, 34). The flesh of the sacrifice must be eaten the day it was slain; none could be left over (Lev. 7:16). Whether the "shoulder" presented to Saul was the left, of which the laity might eat, or the right, which belonged to the priest, is not mentioned. But it was the portion reserved for Saul as the guest of honor.

Samuel said. Though the word "Samuel" is not in the Hebrew, he was apparently the speaker. It was obvious to Saul that his coming had been foreseen and carefully planned for, and he must have been convinced of God's invitation to assume the responsibilities of leadership.

25. Communed with Saul. Saul was not told of his high calling that day. Evidently Samuel spent some time in explaining to his guest the great principles of the theocratic government that had now been in operation for centuries, and the implications of the changes urged by the elders. But the unexpected events of the day did not apparently weigh heavily on the heart of Saul, for he slept until called by the prophet the next morning.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-27PP 608-610

2-8PP 608

11, 12, 14-21PP 609

22-24, 27PP 610

²

CHAPTER 10

1 Samuel anointeth Saul. 2 He confirmeth him by prediction of three signs. 9 Saul's heart is changed, and he prophesieth. 14 He concealeth the matter of the kingdom from his uncle. 17 Saul is chosen at Mizpeh by lot. 26 The different affections of his subjects.

1. Vial of oil. Olive oil was a symbol of prosperity (Deut. 32:13; Deut. 33:24). The anointing of the body with oil was from the beginning of history, and still is among primitive peoples, a general practice. Later, perfumed ointments were used. Persons were

²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Sa 4:3). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

anointed for various reasons: as a mark of honor (Luke 7:46; John 11:2), in preparation for social events (Ruth 3:3), or as signifying a proper qualification for some special service, dignity, function, or privilege.

The Lord hath anointed thee. Among the Hebrews the anointing of a man by a prophet was symbolic of the impartation to him of a special endowment of the Holy Spirit for the accomplishment of his appointed task. This holy anointing oil was used for the consecration of articles used for religious purposes, such as the tabernacle (Ex. 30:26–29), and for the consecration of priests (Ex. 29:7; Ex. 30:30; Lev. 8:10–12; etc.). Special care was to be exercised in its preparation and use (Ex. 30:23–33). There was, of course, no more sanctity in the oil itself than in the water of baptism; it did not *convey* special virtue—it was only a *symbol*. Some think the practice of anointing a king originated in Egypt; others see in ancient Canaanite ritual an evidence of its very early use.

The anointing with oil is an excellent illustration of how God makes use of human customs to lead men to reach out for a deeper, truer knowledge of salvation. God directed the Israelites to make familiar types of coverings, carrying poles, etc., for the sacred furniture and vessels of the tabernacle, resembling, to some extent, those the Egyptians used in connection with their temples. Articles of similar workmanship were found in the tomb of Tutankhamen. Here were also found guardian figures like the cherubim, their wings touching, wrought in high relief on the sarcophagus of this Pharaoh. To the Wise Men of Christ's day God gave a sign through a medium with which they were familiar—a star to guide them to Bethlehem. Whatever the age and whatever the customs of the people, God uses media familiar to the people in teaching them of His holiness and of the beauty of the plan of redemption.

2. *Thou shalt find.* It would be most natural for Saul to be somewhat bewildered by the unexpected turn of events. What a surprise it must have been to him to find himself the center of attraction, with Samuel, the leader of Israel, prepared to receive him with honor. He might well ponder the meaning of all this. As evidence that the Lord was calling him, the Holy Spirit spoke through Samuel, revealing future events. Evidence of the foreknowledge of God, verified within a few hours after his anointing, encouraged Saul to accept the responsibility to which he was now called. He felt assured that God would be with him. Samuel had already informed him that the asses had been found; now further inspired testimony was provided by way of confirming the prophet's message.

To the humble and willing heart God multiplies evidence of the way in which to go (Isa. 30:21; Jer. 33:3; see DA 224, 330, 331, 668; MB 150). And the beauty of it all is that He has a thousand ways in which to manifest these evidences; He is not confined to any set method. The fact that the Holy Spirit spoke in the days of the apostles by tongues of fire is no reason that He must manifest Himself in the same way at another time. The apostles were led to select the 12th member of their group by casting lots, but that does not mean that the flip of a coin is the best way to secure an answer to individual problems today.

By Rachel's sepulchre. See Additional Note to ch. 1.

3. *The plain of Tabor.* Literally, "the oak of Tabor." Oak trees sometimes have long lives and grow to a great size; such trees made excellent landmarks. The strange gods of Jacob's household were buried beneath "the oak which was by Shechem" (Gen. 35:4). Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, was buried near Bethel "under an oak" (Gen. 35:8).

Somewhere between Rachel's tomb and Gibeah was this tree that belonged to a man, or was in a district by the name of, Tabor.

5. *The hill of God.* Literally, "the Gibeah of God." As Gibeah (v. 26) was Saul's home, "the Gibeah of God" was probably that portion of the hill where the high place was situated and from which the company of prophets was to be seen coming down.

A company of prophets. From the context it seems clear that the prophets were making use of sacred music and song to refresh their minds concerning past providence of God. This word translated "they shall prophesy" literally means "they shall be acting the prophet." They were chanting God's praises with fervor. This seems to have been one of the methods instituted by Samuel as a part of the curriculum of the schools he established, to refine and spiritualize their minds (see Ed 47).

6. *Thou shalt prophesy.* The verb is a form of *naba'*, "to act as a spokesman for God." Here reference is not to foretelling future events but to the expression of divine truth in the form of sacred song. The same form of the verb is used in describing the false prophets of Baal, who cut themselves as if possessed by an evil spirit (1 Kings 18:28, 29), although no one would question that it was an entirely different spirit that possessed those heathen prophets. These "sons of the prophets" were singing praises to God when Saul met and joined them in such singing. The many evidences of divine providence upon his pathway during the past few hours had indeed brought about a transformation, which, temporary though it was, gave promise of what God was ready and eager to do for him should he remain humble and submissive.

Turned into another man. There come times in men's lives when a change of circumstances or some divine gift frees them from former restraints, and they find themselves subject to a change as rapid, fresh, and striking as when a moth emerges from its cocoon, or a night-blooming cereus suddenly begins to unfold its exquisite beauty and send forth its wondrous perfume, where but a few moments before there was nothing of the kind apparent. Every good and perfect gift comes from God (James 1:17). Bezaleel and Aholiab were given special wisdom and skill for the work of the tabernacle (Ex. 31:2–6); almost overnight Moses was changed from a timid herder of sheep to an emancipator, standing fearlessly before the king. Similarly Gideon was changed into a man of great courage, able to lead an army to victory—not by his own wisdom and skill, it is true, but by inspiration of God. The egotistical, self-righteous Peter was changed similarly into a fearless leader of the early church. Such changes are wrought when the Spirit of God imparts to men a vision of new possibilities, and their souls respond in sacred joy and gladness, delighting in the acceptance of God-given responsibility.

The reality of the transformation becomes apparent as changes occur in the thoughts, the habits, the life. Old things pass away; all things become new (1 Cor. 5:17). But it must be remembered that such a change becomes permanent only with the daily reaffirmation of the choice thus made. Gideon, for instance, led the Israelites of his day into idolatry as great as that from which he had but recently delivered them (Judges 6:1, 10, 25; 8:24–33). Saul likewise refused to follow on to know the Lord, and as a result finally arrived at the place where he was entirely under the control of Satan. How many men, today as in ancient times, wear the badge, "might-have-been"

7. *Do as occasion serve thee.* Saul was to realize in everything that befell him that God was giving him divine evidence of his appointment. Why had he not found the asses before? Why had he wandered this way and that until he came to Samuel, before learning

anything about them? In all this he was to understand that, though unseen, God had been with him all the way. With all these evidences before him, he was to watch for further evidence of divine guidance. For the time being, this was all God saw fit to reveal to Saul concerning the future.

God is with thee. All heaven was interested in helping him to determine that his life should be ordered of God. In the circumstances of his everyday life he was to envision the leadings of God. How different the history of Israel might have been had Saul been content to wait for the Lord's direction. He had evidence that the circumstances of his return home were ordered of the Lord. He had been told what was to happen, in order that he might be encouraged to cooperate with God by permitting the Spirit to instruct him, protect him, and direct his actions.

8. Go down. Samuel gave Saul sufficient insight into the future to prove that God was working for him. He could not at the moment tell Saul precisely what circumstances would call him to Gilgal. To do so would tend to confuse the young man rather than to help him (see chs. 11:15; 13:4, 8). Samuel simply assured the king-to-be that, by doing as the occasion required, he could always expect as much success in waiting for God's guidance as he had enjoyed upon the day of his anointing.

9. Gave him another heart. Literally, "God transformed for him another heart," meaning, "God converted him." This change of heart would also be accompanied by a change of direction in mental activity. Instead of thinking about asses and farms, Saul must learn to think of the problems that confront a statesman, a general, and a king. God was prepared to impart to Saul ability commensurate with his new responsibilities. What thoughts must have passed through Saul's mind that day as incident after incident Samuel had predicted was fulfilled (vs. 2-7)

God was ready to transform Saul's vision, ambition, and aspirations in such a way that the things of God would become to him the all-important issues of life. Centuries later a prophet said, "I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh" (Eze. 11:19). Saul had inquired of God through Samuel, in an endeavor to find his way through personal perplexities. God first answered the plea for personal guidance, and then invited Saul to accept His guidance in matters that affected the welfare of the entire nation. So it is today. God takes men where He finds them and invites them to fulfill His own glorious plan for their lives.

11. Is Saul also among the prophets? This seemed incredible to the people. Apparently Saul's life prior to this time had hardly been a model of piety. It was little less than a miracle that he should have become a prophet, though, it is true, not in the sense of being called to the prophetic office. But here he was extolling the majesty and power of God and giving inspired utterance to sacred truths. In his heart he treasured a secret that must have been difficult to keep, and the recent evidences of divine grace and providence vouchsafed to him stirred him to the depths of his soul. His pent-up emotions burst forth with evidence that the words of Samuel had indeed come true—Saul had been "turned into another man" (v. 6). His experience bore witness also to the fact that God is able to transform the most unpromising of men into instruments that will be useful to Him. Furthermore, in the case of Saul, this remarkable change would attract the attention and confidence of the people and prepare them to follow him as their leader.

God often works in ways contrary to human planning. It was incredible, so the Jews thought, for the disciples to speak in foreign tongues on the day of Pentecost. To us it

seems unwise that Christ, knowing the character of Judas, should have made him treasurer of the disciples (John 12:6). To Naaman it seemed absurd that the waters of the muddy Jordan should possess more healing power than the clear-flowing streams of Damascus (2 Kings 5:12). The cross of Christ was despised by the Greeks as a most contemptible means for the salvation of the world (1 Cor. 1:18–24). To the modern mind it may seem unjust that the Lord instructed Abimelech to restore Sarah to her husband and request his prayers, when he had taken her in the integrity of his heart (Gen. 20:5). To John the Baptist it seemed inappropriate that he should baptize the Son of God (Matt. 3:13–15). To Simon's mind it was inconsistent with Jesus' position that He should allow Mary to anoint His feet, if He knew the kind of woman she was (Luke 7:37–40). Yet all these seeming inconsistencies are resolved when the work and power of the Holy Spirit are taken into consideration.

The prophetic schools under Samuel's administration were organized that the youth might be educated in the truths of God. Much study was given to history, to memorizing the Scriptures, to prayer, and to hymnody. In the place of poetical utterances about Baal, the storm god, Israel was taught the marvelous works of the Lord, and His praise was expressed in song. As the contemplation of the benefits of God brought joy and peace to their troubled hearts, their faces would light up, reflecting the inner illumination of the Holy Spirit.

16. Told him not. The wise man affirmed that there is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Eccl. 3:7). How different from Jehu's (2 Kings 9:4–13) reaction to his anointing by the prophet was that of Saul. If God was responsible for calling Saul to the kingship, He would make it known to the right people at the right time. Under the control of the Holy Spirit, Saul followed Samuel's directions to await the guidance of God. To be fit for high office, Saul must first learn to control his tongue. His reserve was evidence of a proper estimate of the responsibility now resting on him.

19. Rejected your God. How shortsighted man is to think of pitting his finite wisdom against the omniscience of the Creator. During the days of the judges, when Egypt's armed forces marched through the land time after time, the Israelites had been safe from assaults that subjugated city after city in Palestine. They were unaware that the Egyptian lords returned home with the word that there was nothing to fear from the hill-dwelling Israelites. Israel knew not that these very armies, marching through the land, were instrumental in restraining nearby tribes that no doubt looked with covetous eyes on the well-watered heights of the land west of the Jordan (see on Ex. 23:28).

Throughout the history of the world men have been tempted to question the advisability of God's plans. After the Flood, God covenanted with mankind that the earth should never be destroyed again by water. Instead of trusting this promise, men felt they must build a tower whose top no flood could ever reach. For safety, they must build cities and live in close contact with their neighbors. Even the Jews of Christ's day had forgotten to make the kingdom of God and His righteousness first, and to let God add to them the temporal and material necessities of life as seemed best to Him.

In their anxiety to be like the nations about them, Israel did not realize that they were placing one more handicap on the plans of their heavenly King. Free moral agents, they were limiting God by their choice (Ps. 78:41), and in so doing they were sowing the seeds of selfishness and rebellion. The baleful harvest was sure to come, yet God in His mercy and long-suffering never forsook them.

22. The stuff. Literally, “the things,” “the equipment,” meaning the supplies assembled for the special gathering.

24. Whom the Lord hath chosen. Many raise the question, Why did God choose Saul as king, knowing full well the life he would lead? The context reveals that the people wanted a man of commanding personality who would provide them with strong leadership in war (ch. 8:19, 20). God chose chosen in harmony with their wishes, to prove to them: (1) that He did not limit their freedom of choice, (2) that in spite of their unwise choice He would restrain the evil influences that came with the monarchy, (3) that they must learn by experience that what a man sows he must also reap, and (4) that national departure from the path of God’s choosing does not prevent individuals within that nation from living in harmony with His will and receiving His blessing.

27. Children of Belial. Or, “worthless fellows” (RSV; see on ch. 2:12). It was only to be expected that Saul, a member of the smallest tribe in Israel, would encounter two classes of people, those “whose hearts God had touched” (v. 26) and who seemed willing to follow God’s leading, and others—perhaps including some of the very elders who had come from Judah, the largest tribe, to petition a king—who felt they had been slighted and therefore refused allegiance (see PP 612). The same situation developed when God commanded Moses to substitute the Levites for the first-born of all the tribes, so confining the priestly office to the sons of Aaron. At that time Korah and 250 of the princes of Israel refused to follow God’s leading, and blamed Moses for placing his own family in office. The very fact that Saul took this rejection of his authority so patiently, and made no effort to maintain his right to the throne by force, is the best of evidence that God had touched his heart and was imparting to him wisdom requisite to kingship.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–27PP 610–612

1–11PP 610

5, 6 CT 373

8 PP 617, 627

10 PP 622, 636

17, 20–25, 27PP 611

CHAPTER 11

1 *Nahash offereth them of Jabesh-gilead a reproachful condition.* 4 *They send messengers, and are delivered by Saul.* 12 *Saul thereby is confirmed, and his kingdom renewed.*

1. Nahash the Ammonite. The name Nahash is the familiar Hebrew word for “serpent.” The serpent was a prominent decoration in the heathen temples of Palestine. The children of Israel had seen fit to preserve the brazen serpent after their experience with the poisonous reptiles in the Wilderness of Zin, on their departure from Kadesh (Num. 20:1; 21:5–9; cf. 2 Kings 18:4). Seeing the importance placed upon the snake in all the religions of their neighbors, the Israelites before long were also venerating the serpent that they thought had saved them in the wilderness (cf. Eze. 8:7–12). Later, in the days of Hezekiah, the brazen serpent was destroyed because of such worship (2 Kings 18:4). Inasmuch as personal names were frequently compounded with those of various deities, Nahash was evidently given a name implying certain characteristics of the serpent, such as wisdom, cunning, and craftiness.

Jabesh-gilead. Scholars had previously assigned this town to the hills overlooking the *Wadi Yābis* (Jabesh) 7 mi. (11.5 km.) to the east of the river Jordan. But this would have

been too far for the men of Jabesh-gilead to carry the bodies of Saul and Jonathan the same night they took the impaled torsos of these men down from the city wall of Bethshan (ch. 31:11–13). The archeologist Nelson Glueck found several definite lines of evidence that led him to identify Jabesh-gilead with the modern mounds of *Tell el-*

Meqbereh and *Tell Abū Kharaz*, 2 2/3 mi. (4.3 km.) east of the Jordan, overlooking the river Yabis after it emerges from its deep gorge in the hills of Gilead and flows westward toward its union with the Jordan (*The River Jordan*, pp. 159–167). This city had been the home of the 400 virgins whose parents were slain because they did not participate in the civil war against Benjamin, and who were given as wives to the remnant of that tribe after its almost total destruction (Judges 21:8–14).

Many years earlier than Nahash, Israel had been in subjection to the Ammonites for 18 years. It would be natural that the Ammonites, still resenting their defeat at the hands of Jephthah, would be looking for an opportunity to regain control of Gilead. The Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh had rich soil, watered by the Jabbok, Yabis, and Yarmuk rivers. Well situated above the heat of the desert, their vineyards and fine pasturages were the envy of the peoples of the eastern deserts. Jabesh-gilead had risen from the ruin of earlier days, but its inhabitants had probably not forgotten their brutal punishment following the affair with Benjamin. But stronger than the feud between the men of Jabesh-gilead and their own kin was the hatred Ammon felt for all Israel as a result of the defeat administered them by Jephthah.

2. *Reproach upon all Israel.* Nahash apparently did not know of Israel's desire for a closer organization of the tribes under a king. If the men of Jabesh-gilead knew of the plan—and all the tribes were represented at the selection of Saul in Mizpah (ch. 10:17)—it seems that it meant little to them. The attitude of Jabesh-gilead gives an idea of the disorganized condition of the nation, not so much owing to their need of a king as to their rejection of the Lord's plan. Selfishness had increased to the point where any solution offered by God would not be acceptable to the entire body (see ch. 10:27). It was not that Nahash had any special grudge against the elders of Jabesh more than the rest of Israel; his purpose was to show contempt for all Israel by inflicting injury on some of their number. In the same way the adversary of souls schemes to heap contempt on the hosts of heaven by bringing suffering to one lost soul and then charging that such punishment is the natural result of serving God.

3. *Send messengers.* It would seem that since Israel's servitude under the Ammonites, Jabesh had more or less withdrawn from association with even nearby tribes such as Issachar, Ephraim, and Benjamin. The city was not more than 30 mi. from Shiloh, and Samuel's ministry seems to have been limited mostly to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Judah. Could it be that the men of Jabesh-gilead had so long nursed their grudge against the other tribes that they did not know that Samuel was judge? They certainly seem to have known nothing of Saul's appointment. Probably they had taken no part in the campaigns against the Philistines, but had withdrawn to themselves, unwilling to take their share in tribal responsibilities. They were not even sure that the tribes would make any response to their plea. In sheer desperation they virtually acknowledged their shortcomings and threw themselves upon the mercy of their fellow Israelites, whom they had neglected in the past.

5. *After the herd.* Literally, "behind the oxen." Evidently Saul had been plowing and was bringing his oxen in for the night. Josephus thinks this was at least a month after his

appointment (*Antiquities* vi. 5. 1). Inasmuch as his selection was not pleasing to many, he evidently returned home to await the direction of the prophet who had anointed him. What would have happened had Nahash besieged Jabesh before Saul was made king? And what was more essential than that the new king have the opportunity of proving his worth before the disgruntled ones who refused to acknowledge him as king? The event and the man each stood in need of the other. We have nothing to fear except as we forget how God has led His people in the past. This experience assures every humble Christian that it is not possible for him to be placed in a position for which God has not already made abundant provision.

6. *Came upon.* Literally, “rushed upon.” The same word is used to describe Saul’s experience on the way home from his anointing (ch. 10:6, 10). Concerning the call of Gideon, the record says, literally, that “the Spirit of the Lord clothed himself with Gideon” (Judges 6:34). As Joshua was instructed to go to the aid of the Gibeonites when the five kings of southern Canaan sought to punish them for making a treaty with the children of Israel, so, regardless of the past, when Jabesh was in need of help before the attack of an enemy, the Spirit of God demonstrated that the answer to their prayer for help was well on the way. Thank God for the thousand ways He has out of every difficulty!

7. *Yoke of oxen.* Probably the same yoke with which he had been plowing. How close at hand are the instruments with which God always demonstrates His power! Moses did not need the horses and chariots of Egypt. His shepherd’s crook became the “rod of God.” Gideon did not need the iron spears that the Philistines found necessary. A few clay pitchers and candles were better. Saul did not ask for special equipment. By the sacrifice of his own oxen he convinced Israel of his willingness to spend and be spent for the Lord. His energy and resourcefulness were contagious, “and the fear of the Lord fell on the people.” Once more he demonstrated the fact that, controlled by the Spirit, he would be guided in doing the right thing at the right time. Self was completely forgotten. The criticisms of the sons of Belial that probably had loomed large in his thinking during the past month or more melted away into insignificance. Under this new and, to him, strange power Saul felt his courage mount. Confident of success, he unhesitatingly placed himself by the side of Samuel in bringing protection to a town in distress.

8. *Bezek.* Bezek, the meeting place for the tribal armies, is 12 3/4 mi. (20.4 km.) northeast of Shechem on the road to Beth-shan, and some 10 mi. (16 km.) southwest of Jabesh-gilead. It would not be too far for the northern tribes to march, but it is 42 1/4 mi. (67.6 km.) north of Jerusalem; thus it would be impossible for many from the tribe of Judah to assemble there within the given time. From Bezek, more than 1,000 ft. above sea level, the armies would descend via the *Wadi el-Khashneh* to the Jordan, at this point about 900 ft. below sea level. Forging that stream, they would proceed to the town a mile or so farther east. This gathering of armed men could be accomplished within a period of six days, and by marching from Bezek during the night Saul could reach Jabesh early in the morning of the seventh day. By the morning of the sixth day Saul had enough of an army present to assure the elders of Jabesh that they would have help on time.

11. *The morning watch.* Among the ancient Hebrews the night was divided into three military watches. The first watch is mentioned in Lam. 2:19. Gideon and his army fell upon the Midianites at the beginning of the middle watch (Judges 7:19). It was at the time of the third, or “morning” watch, that Moses stretched forth his rod and the waters of the

Red Sea returned, covering the pursuing Egyptians (Ex. 14:24–27). Here Saul and his three divisions, having marched all night, came upon the unsuspecting Ammonites during the morning watch—just before day—and the battle was waged till toward noon. The rout was complete—no two of the enemy were left together.

Many of God’s providential deliverances have come at this time of the day. David may have been thinking of the Red Sea deliverance when he sang, “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Ps. 30:5). In the words of the watchman who answered, “The morning cometh, and also the night” (Isa. 21:12), the morning brought joy to the elders of the Jabesh but the night of doom to Nahash and his followers. The fate he had planned for the men of the besieged city was turned upon his own head in double measure.

It was at the time of the morning watch that Jacob’s antagonist said, “Let me go, for the day breaketh” (Gen. 32:26). The dawn of a new day brought with it consolation and assurance. It was in the morning watch (the fourth watch as reckoned in Roman times) that Jesus came to the storm-tossed ship on Galilee and stilled the hearts of the disciples, troubled with doubts as to His Messiahship (see on Matt. 14:25). It was in the morning watch that Heaven sent the mighty angel with lightning speed to the tomb outside the gates of Jerusalem, to strike down the soldier guard and cry out, “Son of God, come forth; Thy Father calls Thee” (DA 779, 780)!

Saul did not stop to ask why the elders of Jabesh had not come to Samuel when a king was to be appointed. He did not inquire concerning their past, whatever it might be. They were in need, and the Holy Spirit took possession of him in bringing them help. God is far more interested in one’s attitude after mistakes are recognized than in the mistakes themselves. By their later conduct the men of Jabesh proved that they had experienced a genuine change of heart (1 Chron. 10:11, 12).

12. *Said unto Samuel.* This, together with Saul’s statement in v. 7, indicates that the prophet went with Saul at least to Bezek and assisted in planning the campaign. Probably the armies returned to Bezek before disbanding, greatly elated over their victory, and ready to punish any of those who had opposed Saul’s anointing. His generalship as manifested during the past few days was to them greater confirmation of his title than had been the choice by lot (ch. 10:19–21) or Samuel’s anointing (ch. 10:1).

13. *And Saul said.* Without waiting for Samuel to answer, Saul gave further proof that he had been changed into another man by saying that the victory was the Lord’s, and no man should be put to death. If because of recent developments an enemy could be changed into a friend, greater would be the advantage than if he were put to death. Exactly the same Spirit was now speaking through Saul as spoke through Christ in His Sermon on the Mount when He said, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. 5:44).

15. *Gilgal.* The site is uncertain. Modern tradition favored *en-Nitla*, 3 mi. (4.8 km.) southeast of OT Jericho, but more likely is *Khirbet el-Mefjer*, 1 1/4 mi. (2 km.) to the northeast. According to Joshua 15:7 it was north of the valley of Achor and therefore in the territory belonging to Benjamin. All during the six-year period of war for the possession of Palestine it was the headquarters of Israel, but once the land was subdued the tabernacle was moved to Shiloh (Joshua 18:1). Gilgal was nevertheless still considered a most sacred spot. Samuel visited it in his yearly circuit (1 Sam. 7:16). It was

a special resort for sacrifices (ch. 13:8; 15:21; etc.), later, possibly, for idolatry (see p. 850).

To this place, so fragrant with memories of God's miraculous dealings, Samuel called the children of Israel to renew the kingdom. Here, without doubt, he rehearsed in their ears the loving watchcare and the long-suffering patience of a heavenly Father during the past centuries. It would have been far better had they been satisfied with God's original plan of government, but inasmuch as they desired a king, God promised to bestow His Spirit upon the new king as He had upon the judges. Though they had rejected Him they had abundant witness that God would still be with them. By establishing a line of succession on the basis of heredity, Israel was throwing the doors open for many problems and dangers they had not encountered under the judges. But through Samuel, God affirmed His everlasting love and devotion, and promised to surround them with the same solicitous protection that had been theirs in centuries past.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–15PP 612, 613, 714

1–8PP 612

9–15PP 613

CHAPTER 12

1 *Samuel testifieth his integrity.* 6 *He reproveth the people of ingratitude.* 16 *He terrifieth them with thunder in harvest time.* 20 *He comforteth them in God's mercy.*

1. I have hearkened. The kingdom of God is based upon the principle of free choice. The fact that God knows the end from the beginning does not in any way limit man's making his own decisions (see Ed 178). When God made known to the people before they entered Palestine that the time would come when they would ask for a king (Deut. 17:14), He was not expressing His will in the matter, but only unfolding to them the course events would take.

In all that ye said. God had given them a king who measured up to their ideals, at least in so far as appearance was concerned, and seemed also to meet the spiritual standards desired by God. During the past few months Saul had proved himself to be possessed of the Spirit of God. He was quiet of demeanor, patient toward his enemies, humble before the Lord, obedient to the counsel of the prophet, energetic in warfare, decisive in emergencies, and foremost in self-sacrifice.

A king over you. Had the Lord permitted Israel to hold an election, the political aspirations of the larger tribes would no doubt have resulted in confusion and bitter division. Through the casting of lots, one was taken from the smallest of the tribes. Israel was to realize the continuing need of divine guidance. Even though they now had a king in accordance with their desires, they must remember that it is not by might nor by power but by the Spirit of God that progress can be made (see Zech. 4:6). They should have been willing to follow their judge, Samuel, who had led them through many a crisis during the decades of his ministration. But now that their decision in favor of a monarchical form of government had been irrevocably confirmed, Samuel sought to make it clear to them that a leader can go no faster than his people are willing to follow, and that his moves must be conditioned by their voluntary choice. Though he sensed untold dangers ahead, he bore no resentment in his heart toward them, nor did he in any way whatsoever forsake them and leave them to their own devices.

Here I am. The aged prophet was not self-centered. He sought to bring the people, now greatly excited as a result of their recent victories and happy over the appointment of a king, calmly to take inventory of God's dealings in the past and to survey the prospects of the future. Under the monarchy now established Samuel's services as judge would no longer be needed. The king would surround himself with men of war (ch. 14:52), and the moral influence of Samuel would be overshadowed by the physical force at Saul's command. Yet Samuel could still be God's spokesman and could still be the channel through which the Spirit of God would direct His people.

It was a time of great crisis for Samuel, and he felt that to a large extent the convincing quality of the message he was about to present depended upon his own integrity of character. Except for this his counsel would have little weight. They had known him from his birth; they had known of his work as a prophet; they were witnesses of his conduct as judge and prophet; they knew of his exemplary character; they were personally acquainted with the justice and fairness of his judicial decisions; they readily admitted that he had never enriched himself by his office; they were convinced that his sole object in life was to enforce the mandates of God for their welfare.

Samuel's life shows distinctly that character, like a plant, is of gradual growth. From his childhood, a spirit of consecration had controlled his faculties. As the sap supplies the elements of growth to the plant, so the Holy Spirit became an inner, silent force permeating all his thoughts, feelings, and actions, until all men could see that his life followed the divine pattern. Samuel's symmetrical character was the result of individual acts of duty, performed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus it is today. "In all who submit to His power the Spirit of God will consume sin" (DA 107). It is fully as possible to be a Samuel today as it was a thousand years before Christ.

6. It is the Lord. This Jehovah whom they all had called to witness was the One who "advanced"—literally, "made"—Moses and Aaron. He was the One who protected them from the revenge of Pharaoh, and brought them forth out of the house of bondage. Yet by seeking a king they implied that God could not protect them from the ravages of the marauding bands of surrounding nations even when they were settled in their own cities and were no longer slaves.

9. They forgot the Lord. Surrounded as they were in Egypt by idolaters, and living now among nations that practiced the most degrading forms of worship, Israel found it difficult to be God's peculiar people and to bear witness by their lives of a better way to meet the tangled problems of life. The styles of worship were then as fixed as styles of dress are today. It took a great deal of courage to withstand the tide of public opinion, and few were willing to attempt to do so. Long before the migration to Egypt, Lot had felt that he and his family could live in Sodom and not be influenced by the prevailing customs about them. Sad were the results of his decision. God forbade Israel to make any alliances with native idolaters. But, weary of war, they thought it better to associate intimately with the Canaanites. Sad were the resulting oppressions of Eglon, king of Moab (Judges 3:12–14), of Sisera, captain of the hosts of Jabin (Judges 4:2), of the Philistines (Judges 13:1), and of others.

10. They cried. This supplication consists of two parts: (1) a confession of waywardness in not following their Guide, and (2) a plea for deliverance, accompanied by the promise to serve God faithfully thereafter. But man seems forever incapable of learning from the experience of others. He follows his own inclinations until it is almost

too late, and finally, in sheer desperation, admits his own need of outside assistance. He thinks he has learned his lesson and will never fall again.

Solomon, for instance, went into the laboratory of life and tried out every conceivable highway to happiness. But with each experiment he found nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit (Eccl. 1:14, 17; 2:11, 15, 17, 23, 26; etc.). Finally he came to the conclusion that the fear of the Lord and obedience to His precepts constitute the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13). But even with such examples before them men soon forget the conclusions of the wise man till they have traversed the same road themselves and proved to their own satisfaction that what a man sows he is sure to reap.

11. Jerubbaal. Another name for Gideon, reminiscent of the occasion when he broke down the altar of Baal (see Judges 6:25–32).

Bedan. There was no judge by the name “Bedan.” The LXX and Syriac read “Barak.” The Hebrew letter *d* closely resembles the letter *r*, and *n* the letter *k* (see on Gen. 10:4; 25:15). Others identify “Bedan” with “Abdon” (see Judges 12:13, 15), pointing to closer similarity between these two names in Hebrew than between “Bedan” and “Barak.”

Jephthah. The champion of Israel when the children of Ammon first attempted to repossess the land of Gilead (Judges 11). Jephthah told the Ammonites that he relied on the power of God to protect Israel in their possession of the land (Judges 11:24), and his victory over them was as complete as Saul’s later proved to be.

Samuel. The Syriac and Lucian’s recension, or revision, of the LXX have “Samson” instead of “Samuel,” perhaps because it was thought that Samuel would have been too modest to mention his own name. Other scholars think “Samuel” was inserted in the margin by a later scribe and thus finally admitted into the text. But whereas the Hebrew name “Barak” might easily be mistaken for “Bedan,” or, even more likely, “Abdon” for “Bedan,” because of a similarity between the letters, the name “Samson” could never be mistaken for “Samuel,” because of the dissimilarity of the letters.

14. If ye will fear the Lord. Beside themselves with joy over victory, the Israelites had, without thought either for the future or for God’s protective leadership in the past, crowned Saul king. As Adam, by his own free choice, had chosen a way of life contrary to the divine will, so Israel now cast the die that was to affect the subsequent life of the entire nation. Nevertheless God assured the hosts of Israel of divine guidance if they would acknowledge their dependence on Him, accept His counsel, and follow His bidding.

15. If ye will not obey. Israel had rebelled against God in asking for a king. They had often rebelled in the past, yet each time they cried to the Lord help had been forthcoming.

The hand of the Lord. They could not say God’s hand had been against them—He had protected and saved them repeatedly, even though in selfishness and folly they turned from Him again and again. He sought to lead them to respond voluntarily to His love as individuals. How else were they to learn that no nation can be saved as a nation, but that each individual must decide for himself irrespective of his environment?

17. Thunder and rain. God could give Israel no more impressive evidence than rain in the time of wheat harvest (May or June; see pp. 108, 110). Rain then would be startling. In Palestine the spring rain normally ceases before Passover time, and the dry season sets in immediately. Rain comes again in the autumn, preceding the planting of wheat and barley.

That ye may perceive. They were to perceive two things: (1) that they had sinned before the Lord in demanding a king, and (2) that God loved them and would never forsake them. That day they added another memorial to the many evidences already theirs, that the returning prodigal was more than welcome in the Father's house.

20. *With all your heart.* Servitude to God is a voluntary enslavement resulting from love. Man will do for love what he will not otherwise do. Samuel loved the Lord, and his service was that of a bondsman who delighted to be with his master. As the people witnessed such companionship between Samuel and the Lord, it tended to create the same desire in their own hearts.

21. *Turn ye not aside.* True love is not static; it is progressive. God stood ready to reveal His continuing love for Israel, and it grieved Him when they became self-centered and forgot Him. He steadfastly loves man and invites him to return this love in the form of devoted service.

23. *I will teach you.* Samuel assured the people that he had no grudge against them for their choice, and that he would devote his life to further instructing them in the things of God. Although he would not have the responsibility of government, now that they had appointed a king, yet as prophet he would still be God's representative to them. Samuel sensed the dangers of the future. He knew that it would be impossible for man to do right without the Spirit of God to direct him. He began to realize that his burdens as prophet would probably be heavier even than in the past, yet he was determined that no one should ever be able to point the finger at him in reproachful terms, declaring that he had not stood by Israel through all the vicissitudes of life. He had been loyal to them as a judge; now that they had demoted him, as it were, he would prove that his love for them, like that of God, was unchanged.

24. *Consider.* One of the greatest needs of men today is time for meditation—meditation on God's infinite goodness and the evidences of His care and guidance.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–25PP 614, 615

1–4, 11PP 614

12 PP 615

13 PP 636

16–25PP 615

19 SC 44; 5T 641

CHAPTER 13

1 *Saul's selected band.* 3 *He calleth the Hebrews to Gilgal against the Philistines, whose garrison Jonathan had smitten.* 5 *The Philistines' great host.* 6 *The distress of the Israelites.* 8 *Saul, weary of staying for Samuel, sacrificeth.* 11 *Samuel reproveth him.* 17 *The three spoiling bands of the Philistines.* 19 *The policy of the Philistines, to suffer no smith in Israel.*

1. *Saul reigned one year.* The meaning of this passage of Scripture is not clear, as all translators and commentators have agreed. A literal translation of the Hebrew text was as we have it today reads, "Saul year[s] old when he began to reign, and two years he reigned over Israel" (on "year[s] old" see Vol. I, p. 181; also on Gen. 5:32). Ever since the days of the first Bible version this text has puzzled translators. Earlier editions of the LXX avoided the difficulty by omitting the verse entirely. The Targums paraphrased it to read, "Saul was as innocent as a one-year-old child when he began to reign." The Syriac

gives it, "When Saul had reigned one or two years." Like preceding translations of the text, that of the KJV is a paraphrase that gives, not the Hebrew as we have it today, but what the translators thought the original text of the Hebrew to have been. The RSV assumes two omissions: "Saul was ... years old when he began to reign; and he reigned ... and two years over Israel."

Some commentators agree that here is doubtless an instance where an omission has occurred in the process of copying, though at what time in the transmission of the text the omission may have occurred no one can tell (see Vol. I, p. 15). If the extant Hebrew text *is* the result of an omission, it stands as evidence of the carefulness and conscientiousness of later copyists in their work of producing new manuscripts, for they did not tamper with the text itself but left it as they found it even though its meaning was obscure.

Little is to be gained by conjecture; however, a tentative explanation may be offered. The form of the statement under consideration corresponds exactly to that of the formula commonly used by Bible writers in giving a king's age when he began to reign and the duration of his reign. The corresponding formula for David appears in 2 Sam. 5:4 (see also 2 Kings 21:1; 24:8, 18; etc.). If omissions similar to those that appear to have occurred in 1 Sam. 13:1 had been made in a comparable text, such as 2 Kings 21:1, it would read: "Manasseh was ... years old when he began to reign, and reigned ... and five years in Jerusalem." In basic construction the two passages are identical. The insertion of one figure for the age of Saul when he became king, and another for the length of his reign, would make the statement parallel to the statements for David and other kings. In the original text the phrase "... and two" may have read "forty" (see Acts 13:21). The Hebrew text of 1 Sam. 13:1 as it now stands thus implies that it originally constituted a statement of Saul's age and the length of his reign. If it does not, then Saul is the only Hebrew king for whom the OT makes no such statement.

According to another explanation 1 Sam. 13:1 should read, "Saul reigned one year; and he reigned two years over Israel." That is, he had completed the first year of his reign (see p. 138) and was in the second year when the events of this chapter occurred. It must be admitted, however, that to construe the Hebrew of 1 Sam. 13:1 to mean that the events of ch. 13 occurred in Saul's second year is unnatural and a construction without an exact parallel in the Bible record of the kings.

The passage may reasonably be understood as meaning that Saul made an attempt to subdue the Philistines in his second year, although the first real blow—that of Jonathan, here recorded—came somewhat later. Thus understood, there is harmony with the translation and first interpretation here mentioned for 1 Sam. 13:1. If it be concluded that PP 616 seems to be premised on the KJV interpretation of this verse, it might be pointed out that the statement itself can be taken as referring to the first attempt. But no matter what translation or interpretation is given this passage, we are still left in perplexity as to the original reading of the text. However, in this as in other instances of difficult and obscure texts, no question of doctrine, and thus of our salvation, is involved.

2. Gibeah. Gibeah is now generally identified with *Tell el-Fūl*, a lookout point on the crest of the central range of mountains, 3 1/2 mi. (5.6 km.) north of Jerusalem. The ruins of what is believed to have been Saul's fortress-capital there have been recently been excavated (see Vol. I, p. 124).

3. The garrison. Heb. *nešib*, "pillar," "prefect," "deputy," "garrison," or "post." Commentators have generally felt that the meaning "prefect," or "governor," should be

understood here as being more in harmony with the context (but see PP 616). In Gen. 19:26 *nešib* is rendered “pillar,” and in 1 Kings 4:19 and 2 Chron. 8:10 as “officer” or “officers.”

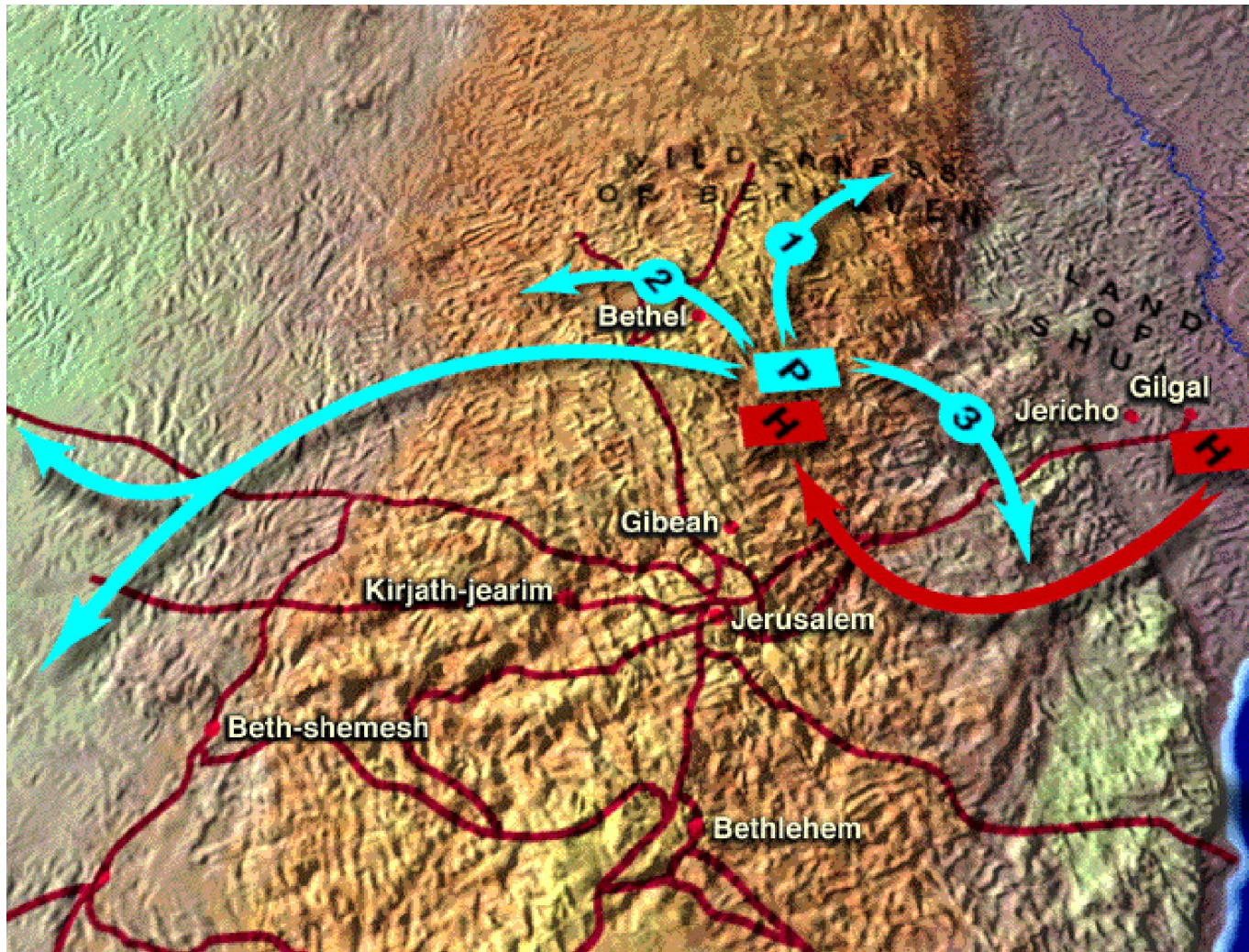
Geba. About 4 mi. (6.4 km.) northeast of this Gibeah is *Wadi Medineh*, a great crack in the surface of the earth, hardly noticeable even a short distance from the brink. Its sides rise as impassable precipices, hundreds of feet in height. On the southwest side of the wadi is Geba, and 1 3/4 mi. (2.8 km.) to the northeast across this wadi lies the town of Michmash, on a tableland some 700 ft. (213.4 m.) lower than the district around Gibeah (*Tell el-Fül*). The land to the east of Michmash slopes gently for some distance, making good farming land, and there is a clear view of the approach from Jericho. Bethel is about 6 mi. (9.6 km.) north of Gibeah and more than 100 ft. (30.5 m.) higher than Gibeah.

Michmash would command the main road from Jericho and the Jordan valley to Bethel, and the chief highway running north from Jerusalem to Shechem. Saul posted his son Jonathan and a third of the armed soldiery at Gibeah, while, with two thirds of the company, he guarded the approach to Bethel and Gibeah from the east. This would be the most likely road the Ammonites would take should they seek to avenge themselves on Saul for his victory at Jabesh-gilead. He did not anticipate trouble from the west, for there was peace with the Philistines (ch. 7:13).

The Battle of Michmash

3

³Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Sa 10:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



The Philistines. Although the Philistines were not at war with Israel, they nevertheless maintained posts in the hills, such as the one at Geba southwest of Michmash, across the wadi from it and over 200 ft. higher. The word *nešib*, translated “garrison,” comes from the verb *našab*, “to take one’s stand,” “to be stationed,” that is, by appointment or in the line of duty. Not far away, at Ramah (see on ch. 1:1), was a school of the prophets organized by Samuel. Evidently Samuel tried to counter the heathen Philistine influence by placing his school nearby, hoping thus to draw the people back to the worship of Jehovah. If only the influence of the prophetic school had permeated the individual lives of the inhabitants of Geba, so that the Philistines could see the true import of God’s salvation, bloody warfare might have been averted and many Philistines might have accepted God, even as Naaman the Syrian did in later years (2 Kings 5).

Let the Hebrews hear. The noun “Hebrew,” used of the Hebrew people, occurs only 35 times in the entire Bible, 31 times in the OT and 4 times in the NT. Of the 31 OT references, 16 occur in connection with Israel’s stay in Egypt and 5 in connection with this war against the Philistines (chs. 13 and 14). In contrast, the word “Israel” is used

hundreds of times in the Scriptures, and the question arises as to why such a contrast should occur in these two instances. But one fact is clear. The term “Hebrew” is always used by foreigners or by Israelites when speaking of themselves to foreigners. It is now generally believed that “Hebrew” was the common name by which the Israelites were known to their neighbors (see on Gen. 10:21; 14:13). Pharaoh and his people seem to have used both names interchangeably (see Ex. 1:16; 5:2; 14:5; etc.; see also on 1 Sam. 13:7).

4. Was had in abomination. Perhaps better, “made themselves odious.” The same verb is used in describing manna that had been left overnight (Ex. 16:20, 24).

After Saul to Gilgal. Inasmuch as the kingdom had been confirmed at Gilgal (ch. 11:14, 15), Saul called all Israel to assemble there rather than at Gibeah or Michmash, where their preparations could be observed by the Philistines. The Philistines would have little difficulty in reaching the latter place, by marching through the various tributary wadies. It is difficult to understand why Saul did not ask Israel to reinforce the army already stationed in the district of Benjamin. That would have been near the home of Samuel and close to the sacred site of Bethel (see on ch. 1:1). The rocks of the wadi at Geba would make a magnificent fortress, and certainly the residents of that district knew more about the defensive terrain than did the Philistines, now bent on vengeance. In his dilemma Saul seems to have remembered what Samuel had told him about going to Gilgal (ch. 10:8).

5. Thirty thousand. The Lucian text of the LXX and the Syriac read “three thousand.” The difference between the Hebrew words for 3 and 30 is slight, and one might easily be mistaken for the other.

6. Hide themselves. Remembering keenly the defeat years previously near Shiloh, and especially in the absence of Samuel, the Israelites were panic-stricken. The mobilization of the Philistines so frightened the people that Saul was unable to maintain order in camp, and morale rapidly deteriorated. Completely forgotten was the victory of a few months ago at Jabesh. Forgotten also were the confessions and sacrifices when, more recently, they had rejoiced before God at this very place (ch. 11:15). What a contrast between their fright and the faith later manifested by Elisha when his servant, terrified by the host of Syrians before the city gate, had his eyes opened to see the mountain full of angelic forces. How important it was at this time of crisis for Saul and the men to wait for the prophet’s counsel and blessing before moving into battle!

7. Hebrews went over. When Saul sounded the call to arms, he said, “Let the Hebrews hear” (v. 3). Yet v. 7 notes that “the *Hebrews*” fled across Jordan (the words “some of” not being in the original text), while v. 6 states that *Israel* hid in the caves “in the hill country of Ephraim” (ch. 14:22, RSV). The word “Hebrews” is used consistently by the Philistines in referring to their opponents, but the author of Samuel seems to differentiate between the two terms, “Israel” and “Hebrews,” as, for example, in v. 19, where mention is made of the fact that the Philistines controlled all the workers in iron, “lest the *Hebrews* make them swords.” In contrast, the author himself says that “the *Israelites* went down to the Philistines” to have their implements sharpened. The LXX, however, here translates the word “Hebrews” as “slaves.” See on v. 3.

8. Tarried seven days. This does not necessarily mean that Saul had already waited seven full days, and that Samuel did not arrive till the beginning of the eighth day and was therefore a day late in meeting the appointment. It is possible that when the prophet

did not appear during the early part of the appointed day (see PP 617, 618), Saul assumed the responsibility of offering the sacrifice. Upon anointing Saul king, Samuel had instructed him with respect to this occasion; he was to go to Gilgal and wait there till Samuel should come (see ch. 10:8; cf. PP 617). Samuel did, however, arrive soon after the time appointed for the sacrifice, only to discover Saul's act of disobedience (ch. 13:10).

11. *The people were scattered.* In predicting Israel's request for a king, Moses warned that the ruler was not to "multiply horses," that is, to trust in material equipment for protection (Deut. 17:16; cf. Isa. 31:3). On the contrary, the king, as leader of the nation and an example to the people, was to procure a copy of the law, become a diligent student of it, and obey the instruction there recorded.

But Saul, thinking of the military equipment of Israel's neighbors, with their standing armies, came to think of safety and success apart from simple faith and trust in God. With this concept in his own mind, he failed to inspire his men with the courage that results from faith in God. Lacking this, and with no weapons on which to rely, his men—with clearer sight than that of Saul—could see no basis on which to expect victory. The prospect appeared hopeless. Thus it was that at the first intimation of real danger the major part of Saul's army deserted out of fear for their personal safety, and left him with no more than 600 men at Gilgal. His scouts had brought word of the enemy concentration 11 1/2 mi. (18.4 km.) away, at Michmash, and he feared not only for the nation but also for his own safety.

Saul had forfeited the confidence and respect of his army. Each day more and more of his men deserted. He was completely discouraged. The tide of his popularity was ebbing fast. He was ready to lay blame for the situation completely on Samuel, who had failed to appear. Saul felt aggrieved that Samuel was not present. In this spirit he met the prophet with no offer of apology but rather in a spirit of self-justification. What a contrast to the spirit in which he had prepared for the attack on Ammon!

13. *Thou hast done foolishly.* That is, in permitting feelings rather than confidence in God, based on past providences, to be in control. If God be with you, who can be against you? What Gideon did with 300 out of 32,000 men, Saul could certainly accomplish with 600 out of 3,000! But if he refused to have confidence in God's promises and in the word of His prophet, and manifested an attitude of unbelief and vacillation in a moment of crisis, how could God continue to be with him? Had Saul been willing to humble his heart, how different the history of Israel might have been.

14. *Thy kingdom.* Saul did not offer as an excuse that he had misunderstood his instructions, or that they were not clearly stated. On the other hand, he frankly admitted the deliberate violation of his instructions in favor of his own wishes. Compare Saul's position with that of Adam in the Garden of Eden, or contrast it with that of Christ in the mount of temptation. Before entering the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, Christ had the assurance that He was the beloved Son of God. Six weeks later, famished with hunger, and not knowing what was ahead of Him, He patiently waited for divine guidance. It was when He was seemingly neglected, and worn and haggard from mental strain, that Satan made every attempt to shake His confidence in God's Word. But where Adam failed, and where Saul chose the downward path, Christ won!

Samuel's rebuke was uttered in such a way as to invite contrition and humility, but in vain. The very presence of the prophet should have brought back memories of Samuel's

solicitude and selfless interest in months past. But alas! All these were forgotten. Saul sought to justify himself by charging that the fault lay with Samuel. As it was with Saul, so it has been with man all through the ages. When troubles press in, fear of impending danger crowds out sensible reasoning and induces a nervous impatience to have the problem settled at once. Under such stress the reason is blinded as to duty and substitutes in its place a critical condemnation of others and a violent determination to justify the course of action thus chosen. Former confidence in God's protecting and directing watchcare give way to cynical unbelief and finally to rebellion.

15. Gibeah. Heb. *gib'ah* (see on v. 16).

16. Gibeah. The Hebrew here reads Geba, not Gibeah as in v. 15. Geba was directly across the wadi from Michmash (see ch. 14:4, 5, where Geba, not Gibeah, is in the original of v. 5). The confusion in the translation probably arose from the opinion that Geba and Gibeah were only variant spellings of the same place, as older maps still show. It is true that Geba is sometimes called Gibeah, but there seem to have been two places (see on ch. 14:16). If recent excavations, in addition to other Bible clues, have correctly placed Saul's stronghold at *Tell el-Fül*, 3 mi. (5 km.) southwest of Geba and directly north of Jerusalem (see Vol. I, p. 124), Jonathan did not go there, but evidently "abode in" Geba, across from Michmash, as here implied, after he took it from the Philistines (v. 3), and Saul probably joined him after returning from Gilgal.

17. Three companies. Ophrah was probably located where two main roads met, northwest of Jericho. The land of Shual—literally, "the land of jackals"—probably designates the cavernous slopes of the district east of Ophrah as the mountains rapidly fall away from the crest of Mt. Ephraim toward the Jordan. This land is honeycombed with limestone caves—excellent places to hide.

18. Beth-horon. Beth-horon Upper and Beth-horon Lower are 9 1/2 and 11 1/2 mi. (15.2 and 18.4 km.), respectively, west of Michmash, near the Ephraim-Benjamin border, where the mountains drop abruptly to the Shephelah. Zeboim is mentioned in Neh. 11:34 as being in the vicinity of Anathoth and other towns south of Michmash, in the direction of the desert of Judah. The Battle of Michmash shows clearly that the Philistines did not advance toward Gilgal; but by flanking movements toward the north, west, and south, they sought to cut off reinforcements from those of Saul's men whom they now thought bottled up in the caves to the east of Michmash.

19. No smith. It seems that for a time the Philistines enjoyed practically a monopoly in Canaan on the fabrication of iron and possibly other metals. At this time the iron used in Palestine came from Asia Minor, and was imported through the coastal cities. These, of course, were under the control of the Philistines. Thus it was relatively easy for them to enforce what was, from their point of view, a wise policy by which to keep the Hebrews disarmed.

20. Share. Or, "plowshare."

Coulter. Or, "mattock."

Mattock. Or, "sickle."

21. They had a file. Recent discoveries make it clear that the statement thus translated should read, "the charge was a pim" (RSV; see Vol. I, p. 164). A "pim" was a monetary unit equivalent to 2/3 shekel, that is, 7.6 g. or .27 oz. avoirdupois.

For the mattocks. The Hebrew reads, "for the plowshares and for the mattocks."

The forks. Heb. *lishelosh qilleshon*. The meaning is not certain. *Lishelosh* is from *shalosh*, which means “to divide into three parts;” it is composed of two words, *le*, “for,” and *shelosh*, a “third part.” The word *qilleshon* is not used elsewhere in the OT, and is of doubtful meaning. The translation “fork” is only a conjecture, based partly on a similar Aramaic word meaning “to be thin,” and the preceding word, *lishelosh*, which seems to have suggested that the “thin” object, whatever it may have been, was “divided into three parts.” The modern Hebrew translation by Harkavy renders the expression as “three-pronged forks,” which is closer to the meaning of the Hebrew than the word “fork” alone.

The RSV translates *lishelosh qilleshon*, “a third of a shekel.” Like that of the KJV and others, this translation also is a conjecture, and is probably based on a transposition of letters in the word *qilleshon*, reading *sheqel*, “shekel,” instead of *qilleshon*, with the *on* being considered a diminutive.

The translation “fork” is questionable because the “forks” of that time, as in many places throughout the Orient where primitive tools are still in use today, were wooden and not metallic. The Israelites would not be taking wooden forks to the Philistines to be sharpened (see vs. 19–21). Obviously, if *lishelosh qilleshon* is to be considered a tool, it must have been made by a “smith” (v. 19). In view of the fact that the “pim” of v. 21 is now known to be a monetary unit and not a “file,” the RSV translation, “a third of a shekel,” becomes plausible though by no means conclusive (see Vol. I, p. 164). The translation, “the charge was a pim for the plowshares” (RSV) therefore seems preferable.

22. Neither sword nor spear. After years of Philistine oppression Saul and Jonathan seem to be the only ones who possessed these metal weapons. The rank and file of the army could have had bows and slings—no mean equipment in the hands of experts (see Judges 20:16)—but they could not compete in hand-to-hand combat with the iron weapons of the Philistines. This verse reveals two things: (1) the battle took place before Israel was well organized, probably early in Saul’s reign, and (2) the lack of equipment made it evident to both sides that God intervened on behalf of His people. Saul might rebel, and as a result do many foolish things; but God still wrought for Israel in such a way as to encourage individuals to join His kingdom and place their trust in Him. Saul refused to follow where God led, but Jonathan was ready and eager to do what his father might have done.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–23PP 616–622

2, 3 PP 616

4–8PP 617

4–8PP 617

8–10PP 618

8–14PP 625, 627, 634

11–15PP 621

14 PP 636, 723

22 PP 616

CHAPTER 14

¹ Jonathan, unwitting to his father, the priest, or the people, goeth and miraculously smiteth the Philistines' garrison. 15 A divine terror maketh them beat themselves. 17 Saul, not staying the priest's answer, setteth on them. 21 The captivated Hebrews, and the hidden Israelites, join against them. 24 Saul's unadvised adjuration hindereth the victory. 32 He restraineth the people from eating blood. 35 He buildeth an altar. 36 Jonathan, taken by lot, is saved by the people. 47 Saul's strength and family.

1. He told not his father. Jonathan was first introduced into the narrative in ch. 13, where he was entrusted with a third of the national guard located at Gibeah. Saul, with the other two thirds, encamped to the northeast at Michmash. At the appearance of the Philistines to avenge Jonathan's defeat of the garrison at Geba, Saul retreated to Gilgal, while it seems that Jonathan remained at Geba and the Philistines occupied Michmash (ch. 13:16). The text is not clear as to whether Samuel returned to Ramah or remained at Gibeah (v. 15), but it is most certain, as the narrative unfolds in this chapter, that God was seeking to convince the Israelites of the need of strict dependence on Him. Jonathan's secrecy is clear evidence of his faith in God despite Saul's rejection at Gilgal. That which would ordinarily be classed as foolhardiness becomes strong proof of the operation of divine providence. The Lord made use of every material evidence possible to convince an illiterate people of His love for them, and of the fact that all things are possible to those whose hearts yearn for deliverance from the bondage of sin.

4. Between the passages. Josephus says, "Now the enemy's camp was upon a precipice which had three tops, that ended in a small but sharp and long extremity, while there was a rock that surrounded them, like lines made to prevent the attacks of an enemy" (*Antiquities* vi. 6. 2). Those who have visited the site, on the north side of the precipitous wadi, say the residents still speak of it as "the fort." This crag was named Bozez, which may mean "white" or "shining," but more probably "soft" or "tender." On the southern face of the wadi is another crag of about equal height called "Seneh," or "thornbush," far easier to scale than that on the northern side. The topographical information in this passage of Scripture is said to have been utilized by Allenby in taking Michmash from the Turks in 1917.

6. The Lord will work. Jonathan did not depend so much on his armor as on the unlimited power of God. He simply used that which he had at hand, and God blessed his humble dependence on Heaven. Even if the king should turn aside from the path of obedience, God proposed to prove to all Israel that salvation is a matter of individual choice and action, and not so much a mass movement. How tragic the situation would have been had God rejected all Israel when the king chose not to obey.

10. If they say. Gideon had asked for an almost impossible sign, humanly speaking, when he requested that the dew be on the ground but not on the fleece (Judges 6:39). Similarly, Jonathan made the call of the enemy to "come up" a sign that God would fight for them. To scale the perpendicular walls of the northern crag was a seemingly impossible feat, especially with armor. God is honored when men expect great things of Him and attempt great things for Him.

13. Jonathan climbed up. Josephus thinks that it was at break of day that Jonathan and his armor-bearer approached the Philistine outpost, and reached it when most of the men were yet asleep (*Antiquities* vi. 6. 2). The narrative of ch. 14 confirms the idea that it was early morning (see vs. 15, 16, 20, 23, 24–28, 30, 31, 45). Whether the two Israelites waited till night to make the ascent or whether it took them but a few minutes to climb

the precipice is not stated. They evidently took the fortress completely by surprise, for the utmost confusion reigned in the Philistine garrison.

15. *A very great trembling.* Literally, “a trembling of God [*’elohim*]” (see KJV margin). The word *’elohim* here refers to the intensity of the quake, and reflects the terror and confusion that prevailed. The word *’elohim* is occasionally used thus as a superlative (see on Gen. 23:6; 30:8). The earthquake was, to be sure, an act of divine intervention (see PP 623). God often interposed by making use of the forces of nature, as at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21–28), at the Valley of Aijalon (Joshua 10:11–14), at Ebenezer, when the Philistines were worsted (1 Sam. 7:10), and upon other occasions.

16. *Gibeah of Benjamin.* Gibeah and Geba (Gaba), feminine and masculine forms of a word meaning “hill,” or “height,” were both towns of Benjamin (Joshua 18:24, 28; 1 Sam. 13:16). It seems that the masculine and feminine forms of the name were sometimes used interchangeably. The distinction between the two places is clear from Isa. 10:29, where they are mentioned in the order in which an invader from the north would reach them. A village by the name of Jeba exists today on the old site, 1 3/8 mi. (2.2 km.) southwest of Michmash, and about 6 mi. (9.6 km.) northeast of Jerusalem. The modern village *Tell el-Fūl* is commonly identified as Saul’s Gibeah, 3 1/2 mi. (5.6 km.) north of Jerusalem. Recent excavations carried on there have unearthed what is thought to be the palace of Saul (see Vol. I, p. 124; Vol. II, p. 72). The “Gibeah” of 1 Sam. 14:16 is Geba, across the wadi from Michmash (see v. 5; PP 622), not Gibeah the home of Saul, if the latter is correctly identified as *Tell el-Fūl* (see on ch. 13:2, 3). From Saul’s Gibeah, 4 3/8 mi. (7 km.) southwest of Michmash and with two ranges of hills in between, it would hardly seem possible to observe what was going on in Michmash, but from Geba, directly across the wadi, this would have been relatively easy.

19. *Withdraw thine hand.* Saul’s impetuosity was developing rapidly. The apparent confusion in the enemy’s camp threw him into such excitement that he could not even wait for counsel from the Lord. For days he and his fellows had stood by and heard reports of raids by the enemy upon nearby towns, and though he did not know the reason for the flight of forces across the wadi, he abruptly gave the order to attack. Had he taken time to seek divine guidance, he would probably have avoided many of the problems that confronted the army of Israel during the next few hours, and his victory over the enemy would have been far more complete. Clearly, this was a case of haste making waste. Jesus’ times of meditation and of prayer brought Him the calm judgment necessary to endure with patience the ordeal awaiting Him; Jacob’s night of wrestling with the angel at Jabbok strengthened him not only to face Esau but to face the years of perplexing problems that followed.

21. *The Hebrews.* See on ch. 13:3.

23. *The Lord saved Israel.* Here is a noteworthy example of divine power cooperating with human effort. Jonathan longed for deliverance from the incursions of the Philistines. Events of the day leave no doubt but that his aspiration was born of the Holy Spirit. Jonathan saw the impulsive fit of depression that afflicted his father, but this only inspired him with greater confidence in the divine Ruler, who had called Saul in the first place. With every advance step Jonathan felt a surge of power, born of faith, that

strengthened him for the next. That day he was proving Jehovah to be a covenant-keeping God—One who was able to make the wrath of man to praise Him.

How much is packed into these words, “The Lord saved Israel”—the aggressive strength and courage of the young warrior, the companionship and loyal support of the armor-bearer, the self-complacency of the watchmen on the crag, the exact timing of the assault, the panic created by the surprise attack, the earthquake, the rout of a confused host, the liberation of slaves who, under the stimulus of Jonathan’s exploit, felt free to turn against their captors, and the return of a king and his army, formerly humiliated beyond measure before his foes. Now, everyone seemed anxious to demonstrate his eagerness to make the defeat of the enemy complete.

Beth-aven. The name Beth-aven probably means “the house of idols,” possibly, “the house of emptiness.” It is thought to refer to a locality in the district north of Michmash and east of Bethel. The main route of the Philistines was to the west toward their homeland, but their confusion was evidently so great that they fled in all directions.

24. Saul had adjured the people. Saul was evidently trying to “save face,” for he no longer thought of victory as being the Lord’s (see ch. 11:13), but only that *he* might be avenged of *his* enemies. This is the second instance within the one day that he turned away from seeking counsel of the Lord; now he forced his own will upon the people as he had earlier upon the priest (ch. 14:19). Perhaps his feelings still smarted from Samuel’s rebuke at Gilgal. The presence of the priest Ahiah (v. 3) as his counselor implies that the prophet had returned to Ramah, instead of remaining with Saul at Gibeah (ch. 13:15).

Jonathan was as careful in heeding God’s word as his father was careless, probably, in no small part, as a result of Samuel’s influence (see PP 623). It may possibly have been an earlier word of encouragement from Samuel that now inspired Jonathan to think in terms of this daring exploit. Even as Saul had been forewarned of the experience at Gilgal months before the event took place (chs. 10:8; 13:8), a similar message from Samuel may have prepared Saul’s son for his part in the events of this memorable day. However this may be, Jonathan was humble, as his father had originally been, in waiting for divine guidance, in following it, and in willingness to give God credit for the results (ch. 14:10, 12). Saul’s arbitrary and rash demand for a day’s fast contrasts sharply with the faithful compliance of the people with their instructions, irrespective of personal desire and need.

Saul’s humility had forever taken flight, it seemed, and in its place there appeared a false zeal, a secret pride, and an abuse of authority that was to mature through the years till he took his own life. Like Judas, Saul ran well for a season. Had he died before calling Israel to Gilgal, he would have been regarded as worthy of the highest place in the kingly roll of honor. Now he had betrayed his sacred trust, yet was permitted to live on that all might see the fruitage of selfishness and perversity.

29. My father hath troubled. Upon learning of his father’s rash command, Jonathan immediately recognized the handicap imposed upon the army, and did not hesitate to let the people know that he did not agree to such restrictions. This is most interesting in view of the repeated statements concerning the unquestioning devotion of the soldiery. The Hebrew implies that Saul made the people swear the oath. Having done so, they of course would feel personally bound to keep it, whereas Jonathan, not having made it, would feel under no personal obligation to do so.

The land. That is, the people (see v. 25).

31. Michmash to Aijalon. A distance of 13 mi. (21 km.) over the high mountainous plateau of central Palestine and down to the rolling country of the Shephelah, 1,000 ft. (305 m.) lower than Michmash, through such canyons as the *Wadi Selman*. The most direct route from Lydda to Michmash would run through the *Wadi Selman* after crossing the road north to Shechem 5 mi. (8 km.) north of Jerusalem. An ordinary march over terrain such as that between Michmash and Aijalon would be considered a full day's journey. The context implies that Jonathan's attack was very early in the morning (see on v. 13). If so, Israel pursued the enemy for a full day, hardly stopping to pick up the spoil, which in this case must have been great. The Philistines had assembled a large number of chariots and horses at Michmash. Added to these were the spears, shields, food, and various other supplies an army must carry. The military achievement of Saul's men would have been a great task for a well-fed army, and was much greater for an ill-fed throng of undisciplined country folk such as he led. What a lesson this experience could have been to Saul, still smarting under rebuke, and jealous only for his own reputation. But once he had set foot in the quicksand of pride, each feeble and indecisive attempt to extricate himself only caused him to sink deeper.

32. Flew upon the spoil. It was evening and the people were released from their vows (see v. 24). In their hunger they slew both oxen and calves, and in their haste neglected to dispose of the blood properly (Lev. 17:10–14).

34. Bring me hither. Like the Pharisees in Christ's day, Saul was punctilious about the observance of outward forms, even though he himself was neglecting far weightier matters. The people were again loyal to their king's command. How sin blinds the soul How changed the record might have been had Saul reflected for a few moments on the extent to which the transgressions of the people might be due to his own sin. How many opportunities the Lord gives a man, who chooses to reject divine counsel, to turn back and seek God's face in all humility How hard it is for that soul, blinded by sin, to accept such opportunities and do as the prodigal did—come home to the Father's house

35. The same was the first altar. Literally, "it he began to build an altar" (see KJV margin). Some think this means that he started an altar but did not finish it; others, that this was the first altar he ever built. The translators evidently accepted the latter rendering and therefore translated *hechel* as "the first" instead of "began," thinking this rendering conformed better to idiomatic Hebrew. This is the only instance in the OT that such a translation of *hechel* is made.

36. Draw near hither unto God. Realizing that great opportunity was slipping away, Saul proposed that, having eaten, they press on during the night. Such maneuvers were not unheard of. Saul had executed a night march from Bezek to Jabesh-gilead to deliver that city from Nahash the Ammonite (ch. 11:11). Gideon followed much the same procedure in his campaign against the Midianites (Judges 7:19–23). The people readily agreed to Saul's proposal, but Ahiah the priest suggested making inquiry of the Lord. Evidently he felt the king had erred in not seeking divine counsel earlier in the day (1 Sam. 14:18, 19).

39. Though it be in Jonathan. Why did Saul not say, "though it be in the king"? Had someone told Saul that Jonathan had tasted food? The silence of the Lord meant divine disapproval, and Saul decided that there was sin in the camp. The people had

demonstrated their loyalty again and again during the day, and Saul's conscience doubtless pointed an accusing finger at his own heart. But perhaps to cover up his own sense of guilt he virtually accused his son, who under God had wrought a great victory. Even as he had strongly implied at Gilgal that the fault was not his but God's, so now he implied that he, as king, was free from fault. He probably sensed that the people were not guilty; therefore, the only one who could possibly be in error would be his son. Even so, the leaders in Christ's day felt themselves above reproach, and voted for the great Hero of our salvation to bear the curse for the entire nation. Stunned beyond measure at the rash violence of Saul, the men of Israel answered him not a word. When God was silent, and the people were silent, what could Saul do but cast lots?

42. *Jonathan was taken.* The inquiring mind might well ask, Why did God permit the lot to fall on Jonathan instead of Saul, seeing the former was innocent and the latter had many times shown clear evidence of his guilt? Certainly God had not approved of the oaths Saul had taken (vs. 24, 39), and most certainly He was not agreeing to the execution of Jonathan after so miraculously directing him during the day. But as in Christ's day, by permitting the innocent One to be condemned, God exposed the evil course of Israel's leaders, so now, by permitting the lot to fall on the innocent Jonathan, God most effectively exposed the evil course of the king. Saul, who had begun his reign in all humility, had now fallen into a hopeless state of self-justification. Unless some extraordinary experience should expose him in such a way as to shake him out of his delusion that a king could do no wrong, Saul would soon ruin his usefulness as a leader.

43. *I must die.* Jonathan had excellent justification for his acts, yet he spoke the truth and submitted himself to the mandates of the king. In what better way could he have condemned his father for disobeying the mandates of the King of kings? Saul, before Samuel, had justified his actions in open rebellion, but Jonathan had justified his day's conduct by submission to the rash judgment of his father.

44. *Thou shalt surely die.* With what apparent ease Saul pronounced the verdict. Whereas Jonathan admitted his ceremonial error—a thing for which a trespass offering would have been sufficient—Saul had committed a moral wrong, which was now publicly demonstrated in the harshness of the sentence on his son. Saul's conscience condemned him for requiring the people to abstain from food, but he hoped by the manner in which he uttered his oath to hide his misgivings. Instead, he succeeded only in condemning himself.

45. *The people rescued Jonathan.* The people had faithfully followed Saul all day long. They had heard him giving the most unreasonable commands, yet they obeyed. They had seen him hold out for minute ceremonial restrictions, but they yielded. They had seen him smart under the silence of the Urim and the Thummim, yet they consented to the casting of lots. They had seen the lot fall on Jonathan, when they knew him to be innocent. Then they remembered the mighty deeds of the hero of the day, and how God had given them the victory through his bravery and faith. The same God who had impressed Jonathan to make his famous exploit, now inspired the army to cry out as one man, "There shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground."

Jonathan had a most difficult role yet to fill, and until his work was done none could touch him. Regardless of how he was treated, he was loyal to his father. At times this loyalty led him to appease his father's impulsiveness, and again to fight by his side—which he did to the very last. Jonathan's honesty, integrity, and faith were attributes

sorely needed in this hour of Israel's history. Even Saul could not break through the bounds set by the Holy Spirit.

47. *He vexed them.* The emphasis in the last few verses of this chapter is placed on the material, rather than the spiritual, advancement of the kingdom. Saul seemed to exult in his military genius. Instead of protecting the rights of his people he took the offensive against his neighbor nations, with the purpose of enhancing his own reputation as king. He imitated these nations, when he might have presented to the world a new and more perfect method of administration.

49. *Ishui.* Evidently Ishbaal, or Ishbosheth (see on 2 Sam. 2:8).

50. *Abner, the son of Ner.* This verse alone does not make it entirely clear whether Abner or Ner was Saul's uncle. Ner is called the son of Abiel (v. 51) and also of Jehiel (1 Chron. 9:35, 36); therefore it is probable that Abiel and Jehiel are two names for the same man (see on Ex. 2:18). Since Kish, the father of Saul, is also called "the son of Abiel" (1 Sam. 9:1), it might seem that Kish and Ner were brothers, but the record says that "Ner begat Kish" (1 Chron. 9:39). This apparent contradiction involves a difference not merely of names but of generations, for Ner is also called the son of Abiel. Yet this does not necessarily mean a conflict between the books of Samuel and Chronicles. As elsewhere in the Scriptures, independent accounts seem to differ in the details presented, but are found to harmonize when examined in the light of Hebrew customs and modes of thought and expression. There are two possible situations that might explain these differing names: (1) The list in 1 Sam. 9:1 may have omitted the name of Ner and recorded Kish as the (grand)son of Abiel, for "son" is sometimes used of a grandson or even a more remote descendant, and Bible genealogies do not always include every link in the chain (see on 1 Kings 19:16; Dan. 5:11, 13, 18; see also Vol. I, pp. 181, 186). (2) Kish the son of Ner may have become his grandfather's son by adoption, as Joseph's children Manasseh and Ephraim became the sons of Jacob and were listed among his sons as heads of tribes (Gen. 48:5, 6; Num. 1:10; Joshua 14:4). Either of these explanations, which would be in harmony with the facts given, would make Abner the uncle of Saul. For similar cases, see on Num. 10:29 and Matt. 1:12.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-46PP 622-626

2 PP 622

6-15PP 623

16, 17 PP 624

18, 19 PP 622

20-24, 27, 32, 33PP 624

44-46PP 625

47, 48 PP 628

CHAPTER 15

1 *Samuel sendeth Saul to destroy Amalek.* 6 *Saul favoureth the Kenites.* 8 *He spareth Agag and the best of the spoil.* 10 *Samuel denounceth unto Saul, commending and excusing himself, God's rejection of him for his disobedience.* 24 *Saul's humiliation.* 32 *Samuel killeth Agag.* 34 *Samuel and Saul part.*

1. *Hearken thou.* Literally, "hear," with the additional thought of obeying. Samuel implied that Saul had once heard the specifications laid down regarding his presence at

Gilgal, but was not obedient. Now he was to be tested again to see whether he would carry out the wishes of God, or again yield to his own desires.

2. *I remember.* Literally, “I have given attention to.” The Amalekites were a nomadic race that inhabited the desert region between Palestine and Egypt. Their livelihood seems to have been secured chiefly by predatory raids on neighboring tribes (see on Gen. 36:12). They had made an unprovoked attack on the children of Israel in the vicinity of Mt. Sinai (Ex. 17:8–16). After that battle Moses called the name of the place “Jehovah-nissi,” saying, “The Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.” In the prophecy of Balaam, Amalek is called “the first of the nations,” meaning that they were the first to war against Israel, but Balaam added that “in the end he shall come to destruction” (Num. 24:20, RSV).

Without doubt the Amalekites had more recently been raiding the southern part of Judah, in the vicinity of Beersheba, and this may have been one reason for the elders of that region asking for a king (see ch. 8:1–5). As Joshua was instructed to defend the Gibeonites against the unprovoked attack of the five kings of the southern confederacy, so Saul was commissioned to relieve Israel from the attacks of the Amalekites. In Joshua’s day the killing of the five kings brought peace. Had Saul carried out the plan of God, Israel would probably have had peace from that quarter much longer than they actually had. The reference to the Amalekites in ch. 14:48 may refer to this campaign, for vs. 49–52 are obviously parenthetical.

3. *Utterly destroy.* Literally, “you [plural] utterly destroy.” The responsibility for the ban on the possessions of the Amalekites rested on the members of the army themselves. But the verb “smite,” in the command, “smite Amalek,” is in the second person singular, placing the responsibility for the extermination of the Amalekites on Saul personally as king of Israel. The Hebrew word *charam*, translated “destroy,” means “to ban,” “to devote,” and thus “to exterminate.” When a country was put under the ban, everything belonging to that nation was looked upon as accursed. The people were to be killed, also the cattle and other living things, but such things as silver and gold were to be brought into the treasury of the Lord (see Joshua 6:17–19). A similar custom existed among other nations of the Near East in ancient times.

4. *In Telaim.* Some scholars identify this site with the Telem of Joshua 15:24, a town on the southern border of Judah close to the Amalekite territory, but nothing definite is known as to its location. Telaim served as the base for the campaign against the Amalekites, as Bezek had for that against the Ammonites (see on 1 Sam. 11:8). It is strange that only five per cent of Saul’s army came from Judah, in view of the fact that tribe suffered most at the hands of the Amalekites.

6. *The Kenites.* Members of the family into which Moses married are referred to both as Midianites (Num. 10:29) and as Kenites (Judges 1:16) either because both names refer to the same family stock or because two families had united. Some commentators have identified the Kenites as descendants of Kenaz, a grandson of Esau by Eliphaz, but nothing certain is known of their origin (see on Gen. 15:19). The Kenites are to be distinguished from the Kenizzites (Gen. 15:19). The Midianites, and thus probably the Kenites also, were descendants of Abraham by his wife Keturah (see on Ex. 2:16). The Amalekites were descendants of Esau (see on Gen. 36:12) and therefore blood relatives of both the Kenites and the Israelites. Some of the Kenites, or Midianites, accompanied the children of Israel to the Promised Land (see on Num. 10:29–32) and received an

inheritance there, among the people of Judah (Judges 1:16) and far to the north in Naphtali (Judges 4:10, 11). It may be that the Kenites here referred to were descendants of those who had settled in the southern part of Judah, adjacent to Amalekite territory, and had intermarried with the Amalekites (see 1 Sam. 27:10).

7. Havilah. The location of Havilah is unknown. Some scholars think it refers to a “sand land”; others, to “sandy dunes.” From the river of Egypt (see on Num. 34:5), Judah’s southwestern boundary, west toward Egypt, is at the present time nothing but a barren waste of sand. The word *shur* means “wall,” which, it is thought, refers to the wall of fortresses built by the Egyptian kings along their eastern border from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean for protection against Asiatic invasions (see on Ex. 2:15; 13:20; 14:2). The desert just east of Egypt is called “the wilderness of Shur” (see on Gen. 16:7; 25:18; Ex. 15:22). Inasmuch as the Amalekites still inhabited the same southern district in David’s day (1 Sam. 30), it is probable that the “city of Amalek” (ch. 15:5) was the residence of Agag the king, and that Saul’s army destroyed that site and scattered the Amalekites far into the desert of Shur. This raid against the Amalekites probably differed but little from their raids on Israel both before and after Saul’s day (Judges 6:3–5; 10:12; 1 Sam. 30:1–18). Saul was apparently content with an incomplete campaign. He had captured Agag, and in ancient times whenever a king was taken his land seems to have been considered subjugated (see Joshua 12:7–24).

8. Agag. Meaning, perhaps, “flaming” or “violent.” It is possible, though by no means certain, that this was a title assumed by Amalekite kings similar to that of Pharaoh among the Egyptians. According to Josephus (*Antiquities* xi. 6. 5), Haman the Agagite was a descendant of Agag the Amalekite in the 16th generation (see on Esther 3:1).

Utterly destroyed. That is, the Amalekites living in the vicinity of Saul’s attack. The Amalekites were scattered over a wide area of the Sinai Peninsula, the Negeb, and northern Arabia (see on Gen. 36:12). It would not have been possible for Saul to defeat all the Amalekites on this short expedition. That he did not do so is evident from the fact that after this time David carried out further campaigns against them (1 Sam. 27:8; 30:1–20; 2 Sam. 8:12). It was not until the time of Hezekiah that they were finally exterminated (1 Chron. 4:42, 43).

9. Every thing that was vile. By destroying what was not worth saving anyway, Saul and his men contented themselves that they had obeyed God’s command to “utterly destroy all that they have” (v. 3). At the same time the victorious Israelites saved “all that was good.”

11. It repenteth me. See on Gen. 6:6; Ex. 32:14; Judges 2:18. Many have found it hard to reconcile this statement with 1 Sam. 15:29, that God “will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.” Both verbs are forms of *nacham*, which Gesenius defines as “to lament” or “to grieve” because of the misery of others, and hence “to pity”; also, because of one’s own actions, “to repent.” In no place does the Bible say that man repents of the good he may do—but only of the evil. Yet God is said to repent of the good He does as well as of the evil (see Jer. 18:7–10). “Man’s repentance implies a change of mind. God’s repentance implies a change of circumstances and relations” (PP 630). The word *nacham* should be translated in such a way as to bring out this thought.

Under the principle of free choice God makes of no man a mere machine to carry out the divine purposes. True, these purposes will be carried out eventually (Isa. 46:10), but

the individual or nation called to carry them out does not therefore forfeit the privilege of choosing to comply with or to reject God's proposals (see Ed 178). He who at first says, "I will not go," but changes his mind, is far better than he who promises to go but later decides not to (see Matt. 21:28–32). In each case, if the instrument of God's desire proves unworthy, God "grieves" over the individual's decision but permits him to pursue the course he has chosen and to reap the seed he has sown. Saul's decision to follow his own desires did not in the least thwart God's eternal purpose, but it did provide an opportunity for God to demonstrate His long-suffering, in permitting Saul to remain king. The natural sequence of cause and effect is one of the great lessons to be learned by man in this great controversy between good and evil.

It grieved Samuel. Literally, "it kindled Samuel." Where this verb is used in connection with the word "anger," it is usually translated, his "anger was kindled." This is the only instance in the OT where the verb *charah* is translated "grieved." It is incorrect to translate, "Samuel was angry," for the further statement is added that Samuel "cried unto the Lord all night" (see v. 11). The prophet was so disappointed and perplexed that he sought the Lord with all his heart to learn the way out of the deplorable situation.

12. Carmel. Not the Mt. Carmel where Elijah met the prophets of Baal, but a town 7 1/4 mi. (11.6 km.) south by east of Hebron, where David encountered Nabal (ch. 25).

Set him up a place. Here Saul "set up a monument" (RSV) to his victory, and then went on to Gilgal near Jericho, perhaps to redeem the disgrace he had experienced there (ch. 13:11–16).

13. I have performed. With an apparent show of great respect, Saul waited expectantly to receive Samuel's commendation. Like men all through the course of history, Saul was ready to believe that he had carried out the commission given him, merely by performing that part of it that was agreeable to him. He had made a foray against the traditional enemies of Israel, and had returned with Agag as proof of the accomplishment of his mission. The victory monument erected in Carmel is evidence of his self-satisfaction. Like Saul of Tarsus, Saul the son of Kish had no doubt come to believe that acts of his own choosing were performed in harmony with God's will. But here, of course, similarity between the two ends, for the one knew the will of God and did it not, but the other acted in ignorance (1 Tim. 1:13).

14. This bleating. Though Saul's conscience appeared clear at the moment, the bleating of the flocks spoke forth eloquently of Saul's disobedience and of the fact that his conscience was not dependable. There is such a thing as having the conscience seared with a hot iron (1 Tim. 4:2), instead of having it purged from dead works (Heb. 9:14) and void of offense (Acts 24:16). Since his anointing, Saul had demonstrated many noble traits of character, and Samuel loved him, much as Jesus loved Judas. But the acquisition of power had changed the man into a despot who would brook no interference. While he was in the very act of proclaiming his obedience, the flocks were loudly proclaiming his disobedience.

15. People spared the best. Like Adam and Eve, Saul sought to blame someone else. Would not the people now have been as loyal to Saul's command to destroy everything belonging to the Amalekites as they had been previously in abstaining from food on the day they put the Philistines to rout (ch. 14:24)? For anyone of Saul's nature and intelligence to seek refuge in such an excuse is clear evidence of spiritual breakdown.

17. When thou wast little. A literal translation of the Hebrew of v. 17 permits either the rendering, “Though [or, when] you [were] little in your own sight, [were] you not [made] head of the tribes of Israel?” or, “Though you [are] little in your own sight, [are] you not head of the tribes of Israel?” In the Hebrew text the verbs are implied rather than expressed, and translation into English requires that they be supplied. Assuming that Samuel here refers to a past experience, the KJV uses the past tense, whereas the RSV and other modern translations consider that he is thinking of Saul’s statement of v. 15, and so addresses him in terms of the present. The KJV understands Samuel to be drawing a contrast between Saul’s previous humility and present pride, but the RSV and others take the statement as a contrast between Saul’s expressed subordination to the will of the people (v. 15), a false humility, and his divine appointment as their leader (v. 17).

The phrase, “the Lord anointed thee king over Israel,” appears to be simply a repetition of the preceding statement, “Wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel?” Furthermore, Saul had accounted for his conduct on the basis that it was “the people” who had kept “the best” of the spoils—implying that he had not been able to restrain them (v. 15). According to the RSV, Samuel challenged Saul’s evasion of responsibility—“you are little in your own eyes,” that is, unable to exercise effective control over your men—with a solemn affirmation that he was their leader. In vs. 17–19 (see vs. 1–3) Samuel then proceeds to remind Saul of his personal responsibility in the matter: The Lord had (1) anointed him king, and thus leader of all Israel, (2) sent him against the Amalekites, and (3) commanded him to destroy them utterly. Why had he not obeyed? The question of obedience is ever central in our relations to the God of heaven.

According to the KJV, Samuel was here reminding Saul of his statement at the time of his anointing (ch. 9:21), when from a humble position he had been elevated to be the leader of Israel. It is not God’s plan to place His servants where they cannot be tempted, nor is it His plan to thrust them into the midst of temptation, where, when they yield, He must forgive and then permit them to continue in sin. Rather, it is His desire so to reclaim them that they can win the battle against sin here and now. The Holy Spirit led Christ into the wilderness to be tempted of Satan (Mark 1:12). Saul was given unmistakable evidence that the Lord loved him and would be his constant helper. He could never charge that God, knowing his egotistical nature, failed to give him every opportunity to make good and to overcome his bad traits. The fact that God gave him another heart (1 Sam. 10:9) did not mean that Saul could not return to his old manner of life if he so desired. Would Saul exalt himself? Then God must humble him.

20. Yea, I have obeyed. Only a perverse, obdurate heart would attempt to pawn off disobedience as obedience. By making this claim Saul gave evidence of how far he had wandered from the pathway of right. It was when Eve “saw” that the fruit of the forbidden tree was “good for food, . . . pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise” that “she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat” (Gen. 3:6). It is when a person convinces himself that what God has clearly marked as moral poison is *desirable* for the table of more abundant living that he forswears allegiance to God and swears allegiance to the devil. When what God has said is all wrong appears to be all right, a man may know that he has set foot on forbidden ground, and is without protection against the hypnotic allurements of the tempter. He has blinded his own spiritual eyesight and hardened his own heart (see Eph. 4:30; see on Ex. 4:21).

Christ warned His disciples that “the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service” (John 16:2). From the days of the early church (Acts 26:9–11; cf. 1 Tim. 1:13) to the present, the most severe persecutions against the servants of God have been waged in the name of religion. After the close of probation evil men will continue the forms of religion with apparent zeal for God (GC 615). It is the devil’s cleverest device so to camouflage error that it passes for truth. For this reason the True Witness to the Laodiceans, in whose time the master counterfeiter will put forth his most successful efforts, counsels them to make use of spiritual “eyesalve” that they may “see” (Rev. 3:18) their own true condition, that they may distinguish between truth and error, that they may discern the wiles of Satan and shun them, that they may detect sin and abhor it, and that they may see the truth and obey it (5T 233). Otherwise, like the Jews of Christ’s time, they will be found accepting as doctrine the commandments of men (see Matt. 15:9).

Brought Agag. How preposterous, but true! Saul offers his supreme act of disobedience as proof of full and complete compliance with the command of God through the prophet Samuel. In his spiritually blinded state he now took wrong for right, and felt aggrieved that Samuel should take exception to what he personally considered—and what in a sense was—a very great victory (see PP 629).

21. Things which should have been utterly destroyed. This whole clause is from the one Hebrew word *cherem*, “the devoted things,” “the dedicated things,” “the accursed things,” or “things devoted to destruction” (RSV). *Cherem* is from the verb *charam*, “to prohibit to common use,” “to consecrate to God,” “to extirpate.” Achan appropriated to his personal use “the accursed thing [*cherem*]” (Joshua 7:1, 11, 13, 15; cf. ch. 6:17, 18), which included silver and gold (Joshua 7:21) *reserved* for the sanctuary service (Joshua 6:19). The fact that a person or thing was “accursed,” or “devoted,” did not necessarily mean that it was to be destroyed; but only that it was to be disposed of precisely as God should direct. In contrast with the silver and gold, all else in the city was to be utterly destroyed (Joshua 6:21)—yet they too had been “accursed,” or reserved, “to the Lord” (Joshua 6:17). The same Hebrew word, *cherem*, is also used of offerings “devoted” to sacred use (see Lev. 27:21, 28, 29; Num. 18:14; etc.).

Saul’s statement concerning “the things which should have been utterly destroyed,” or literally, “the devoted things,” takes on new meaning in the light of Bible usage of the Hebrew word thus translated. Samuel had instructed Saul to “utterly destroy [*charam*]” the Amalekites and all their possessions *by slaying them*. They were not simply “dedicated”; they were “dedicated to destruction.” Saul apparently reasoned that it was his privilege to decide *how* the divine command was to be carried out.

Saul no doubt told the truth when he said that “the people” wanted to save the best of the flocks and herds. They were not permitted to take the Amalekite flocks and herds for themselves. But they could enrich themselves by substituting Amalekite animals for those of their own that would otherwise have been required for sacrificial use (PP 629). Saul simply approved of the suggestion as it came to him, and thus assumed the right of interpreting the command of God as he saw fit. For his part, Saul was not interested in the cattle; of these he no doubt had enough and to spare. But if he should return with a conquered king—in keeping with the custom of the day—he would be able to present

before all Israel tangible evidence of his military prowess, and would greatly enhance his prestige. Saul no doubt planned on the public execution of Agag *after* presenting him as an exhibit of his own skill as a warrior. But, instructed of God, Samuel deprived Saul of the planned exhibition by performing the execution himself.

Saul probably reasoned that he would be obeying the command of God with respect to both the cattle and the king, and at the same time adding to the wealth of his subjects and to his own renown. He would accomplish the will of God in a way of his own choosing. Ultimately, both king and animals would be slain; but in the meantime he and his people would profit from them. Herein lay Saul's weakness of character—while pretending to serve God, he really served his own interests first and those of God last. It was no doubt for this very reason that in sending Saul against the Amalekites with the command to “devote” them and all their possessions, God specified the means whereby they were to be “devoted”—death.

Saul failed in this great final test of character. Even Samuel, who had spent the night in prayer to God on Saul's behalf, that the sentence of rejection might be reversed (PP 630), was filled with indignation when he saw the evidence of Saul's rebellion (PP 631). Because Saul had forsaken the Lord, Heaven abandoned him to the course of his own choosing; and Samuel, for his part, “came no more to see Saul until the day of his death” (v. 35). Saul had completely disqualified himself as king by submitting to the desires of the people, by laying upon them the blame for his own wrong decision, and by seeking to assume to himself honor that in fact belonged to God.

In Gilgal. Though not the residence of Saul, Gilgal seems to have been in some respects the functional capital of the Hebrew monarchy. It marked the site of Israel's first encampment after the crossing of the Jordan (Joshua 4:19) and the military headquarters for the conquest of Canaan (Joshua 10:15; etc.). It was here that the actual division of the land was carried out (Joshua 14:6 to 17:18). When the original conquest of the land was completed, about six or seven years after the crossing of the Jordan, the ark was moved from Gilgal to Shiloh (Joshua 18:1). At that time Joshua resided at “Timnath-serah in mount Ephraim” (Joshua 19:49, 50).

The sanctuary service at Shiloh was discontinued when the ark was taken by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:11; Ps. 78:60; PP 609) and the city of Shiloh itself destroyed (see Jer. 26:6, 9). The ark was later returned, first to Beth-shemesh (1 Sam. 6:7–15) and then to Kirjath-jearim (ch. 7:1), where it remained until David moved it to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:2–12; cf. Joshua 15:9, 60). The worship of God was thus in a sense decentralized, though Samuel offered sacrifices in various places (PP 609), probably including Gilgal (1 Sam. 7:16). It was at Gilgal that Samuel assembled Israel to confirm Saul as king after his victory at Jabeshgilead (1 Sam. 11:14, 15). Here also forces were mustered for the attack on the Philistine garrison at Michmash (1 Sam. 13:4). It may also have been the base for the campaign against the Amalekites, as seems to be implied in Saul's proposal to return there to offer sacrifices to God.

22. *Hath the Lord.* Impelled by the Holy Spirit, Samuel gave utterance to this profound truth that was to echo and re-echo down through ages to come (see Ps. 51:16–19; Isa. 1:11; Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6–8; etc.).

23. *Rejected thee.* Here the reason is clearly stated for a change in status between God and man—“because thou hast rejected.” When man chooses to follow his own way, God is obliged to readjust conditions to meet the situation. When Israel wanted a king,

God gave them opportunity to test out the workability of such a plan. The very fact that God permitted Saul to continue as king shows that He had not forsaken him. If Saul would not follow God, he would have to develop his own idea of kingship without the help of divine counsel—not because God was unwilling to guide him, but because he refused to accept guidance.

24. *I have sinned.* Prior to Samuel's announcement that God had rejected Saul as king (v. 23), Saul stoutly defended his course of action. Only when sentence was pronounced and the penalty became known was he willing to admit erring from the divine command. Saul failed to manifest the evidence of a changed life that accompanies "godly sorrow"; his was "the sorrow of the world" (2 Cor. 7:9–11). It was not the sincere desire to do right that impelled this admission, but the fear of forfeiting his kingdom. It was only when confronted with this prospect that he feigned repentance, with the objective of saving, if possible, his position as king. Human praise meant more to him than divine approval.

25. *Pardon my sin.* How different was this request from that of the people at Mizpah when they cried out, "We have sinned against the Lord. ... Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us" (ch. 7:6–8). Was his sin against Samuel or against the Lord? Was he as concerned with the change of heart necessary on his part as he was with the loss of face before the people, in the event he lost the kingdom? His future actions were to reveal clearly the true reasons for his conduct.

26. *I will not return.* Samuel, feeling that God had rejected Saul, at first refused to worship with the king. Humanly speaking, he would have nothing to do with a man who appreciated so dimly what God had done for him. Samuel's attitude was simply a reflection of the attitude of God. If the Lord would have no further dealings with Saul (see ch. 28:6), neither could Samuel, the Lord's representative (ch. 15:35), lest such association be construed as evidence of divine approval.

28. *Hath given it.* The anointing of David and his coronation, though yet future, are spoken of by God as if already accomplished. Saul had irretrievably disqualified himself to serve as king, and God's decision with regard to him was irrevocable. In the will and purpose of God the kingdom had already been given to someone else. Nothing Saul might do now by way of worship (v. 30) would avail to change the sentence. Even prayer would not change it (see Jer. 7:16; 11:14; 14:11; PP 630). To be sure, Saul's rejection as king did not necessarily imply that his personal probation had closed, and that God would refuse to accept him as an individual. He might yet repent personally and be converted. Had Saul been willing at this time to relinquish the throne and to live henceforth as a private individual, he might have found salvation. But it was clear that he could not use the office of king in harmony with the divine will.

Better than thou. So far as the record goes, Saul's only mistake up to this time was that at Gilgal (ch. 13:8–14). There was no blot on his record as in the case of David with Bath-sheba and Uriah the Hittite. Both men were great sinners; the difference between them lay in the fact that, when his sins were pointed out Saul justified his course of action (chs. 13:11, 12; 15:20), whereas David sincerely repented of his sins (2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 51).

29. *The Strength of Israel.* This title for God appears only in this one place in the OT. The word translated "strength" is *nešach*, which is from the verb *našach*, "to be pre-

eminent,” “to be enduring.” In the setting here used this appellation for God is most appropriate. *Nešach* is usually translated “for ever,” as in 2 Sam. 2:26; Ps. 52:5; etc.

Repent. On God’s “repenting” see on Gen. 6:6; Ex. 32:14; Judges 2:18; 1 Sam. 15:11.

30. *That I may worship.* To Saul the forms of worship were important only as a means of securing to himself the loyalty of the people. It was his purpose to represent his own policies as originating with God, in order that the people should come to believe that in following him they were doing God’s will. Religion was thus debased to serve the ends of civil power, for Saul purposed to use God as a means to his own ends.

31. *Samuel turned again.* There were perhaps two reasons why Samuel changed his mind: (1) He wanted to do everything possible to win Saul as an individual. (2) His known disapproval of Saul might lead some of the discontented spirits in Israel to use this as an excuse to revolt. Orderly government must continue even if the king had rejected God’s leadership in order to have his own way.

33. *Samuel hewed Agag.* According to the civil code given Israel (Ex. 21:23, 24), Agag was guilty of death, and Samuel executed him “before the Lord,” even as Elijah later slew the prophets of Baal at Carmel, under the law of blasphemy (Lev. 24:11, 16). By slaying Agag, Samuel thwarted Saul’s purpose to display the king as testimony to his own supposed clever leadership.

35. *Samuel came no more.* See on v. 26; see also ch. 16:14.

Samuel mourned. Reluctant as Samuel may have been in the first place to give Israel a king, once the king had been selected, Samuel remained loyal to him in spite of his mistakes. To Samuel, as later to David, Saul was “the Lord’s anointed” (ch. 24:10). Samuel’s grief over the course Saul had chosen (ch. 15:11; PP 630) is evidence of the sincerity of Samuel’s solicitude for him.

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1–35PP 627–636

2, 3 PP 627, 659

3 4T 146

6 PP 628

7–9PP 629

8, 9 PP 659

9 4T 146

11 PP 630

13, 14 5T 88

13–15PP 630; 4T 146

16, 17 PP 631; 4T 146

17 1T 707; 2T 297

18–21PP 631; 4T 146

22 DA 590; PP 631, 634; TM 241; 2T 653; 3T 57, 116; 4T 84

22, 23 1T 323; 4T 146

23 PP 635; 3T 357

23–25PP 631

26, 28 PP 632

28 Ed 254

29 PP 630

30–34PP 632

CHAPTER 16

1 Samuel sent by God, under pretence of a sacrifice, cometh to Beth-lehem. 6 His human judgment is reproved. 11 He anointeth David. 15 Saul sendeth for David to quiet his evil spirit.

1. How long? Saul had made an inspiring leader. As the first chief of state under a new form of administration, he had almost hypnotic power over the high-spirited and independence-loving Israelite people. But he had rapidly developed into a despot—cruel, tyrannical, and unforgiving. Let it be remembered, however, that although the king had refused God's counsel, and had effectively separated the nation from His guidance, yet this did not bar Saul from salvation as an individual. Nebuchadnezzar, for example, gloried in the thought that his god Marduk was stronger than Jehovah, yet God's Holy Spirit appealed to him through Daniel—so much so that he extolled the God of Daniel as the Most High (Dan. 4:34–37).

Jesse the Beth-lehemite. Samuel was probably acquainted with some of the people of Bethlehem from previous visits. Although he probably knew Jesse, he was unacquainted with the rest of his family (vs. 11, 12).

2. Take an heifer. It was entirely natural and proper for the prophet to visit Bethlehem to make a sacrifice. The ark was still at Kirjath-jearim. It is known that the sanctuary was in Nob during at least a portion of Saul's reign (ch. 21:1–6), but we are not told whether the yearly feasts were held there as they had been in Shiloh. Since the cessation of sacrificial offerings at Shiloh, these had been conducted at various cities throughout the land (PP 609). At such sacrificial gatherings the prophet would instruct the people concerning the great plan of salvation and would encourage them to send their young men to the various schools of the prophets, in order to raise the intellectual and spiritual tone of the nation. The king would thus have no question about Samuel's visiting Bethlehem. So far as the people were concerned, it was a routine ministration by the prophet, similar to a district meeting today.

Say, I am come to sacrifice. It was not in the public interest that the act of anointing David be known at once. Was not Saul's anointing conducted in much the same way? Did the 30 elders who then responded to the invitation to attend the feast know why Samuel had given Saul the seat of honor? They were not present while Samuel and Saul communed together after the feast (ch. 9:25). Neither they nor even Saul's servant witnessed the early morning anointing (chs. 9:27 to 10:1). Nor did Saul's family learn of the anointing until the time of the Mizpah meeting for selecting a king (ch. 10:20–27). The anointing of Saul was to him a declaration of God's plan for his life. He was invited, but not compelled, to accept God's summons. Such anointing gave him no license to initiate action to bring about his actual installation, publicly, as king. The record shows clearly that even after his selection at Mizpah, Saul returned to his home and waited for the Lord to lead in the next move.

The only difference between Samuel's anointing of Saul and his trip to Jesse's home was that at this time there was already a king, suspicious of every move the prophet made since he had announced the Lord's rejection of Saul. This sensitiveness was no doubt greatly increased by Samuel's hesitancy to join his king in worship. There may have been a considerable interval of time between chs. 15 and 16.

4. Comest thou peaceably? From the description given in ch. 9, it is clear that the feast for Saul's anointing was held at the high place, in connection with a feast well

known in advance. But Samuel's coming to Bethlehem unannounced, leading a heifer, and summoning the elders to be present, would naturally lead to considerable speculation. The elders came in fear and trembling, wondering what terrible thing had happened. Such a reaction to the unexpected coming of an important official was entirely natural and, in fact, adds an authentic touch to the narrative.

5. *Peaceably.* Samuel quieted all their fears and authorized them to sanctify themselves, that is, to go through the procedure for ceremonial cleansing, which included bathing of the body, washing of the clothing, and continence (see Ex. 19:10–15; 1 Sam. 21:4–6). Samuel personally saw to it that Jesse and at least his older sons were purified (1 Sam. 16:5). Then all were called to the sacrifice. A few hours would elapse between the sacrifice and the feast, for the heifer must be dressed and roasted before they could eat of it. Samuel took advantage of this interval to become better acquainted with Jesse and his family. That they had not yet assembled themselves for the feast is clear from v. 11, where David is brought in from the fields before they sat down to eat.

7. *The Lord looketh on the heart.* The “heart” refers to the intellect, the affections, and the will (Ps. 139:23; Matt. 12:34; etc.). It is the guiding factor in determining destiny, for as a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). Free choice is essentially a matter of the intellect, but is often strongly influenced by the feelings and emotions. Within the limits of probationary time God invites men: “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18). He would have us become acquainted with Him and with His plan, for it is by beholding that we become changed (see 2 Cor. 3:18). God makes His appeal to the intellect. Outward appearances do not reveal the real motives of life, for oftentimes actions are misinterpreted. When Moses told the children of Israel, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart” (Deut. 6:5), he was thinking of the guiding influence brought to bear on the life through personal acquaintance with God. The fact that the disciples had seen God through associating intimately with Jesus (John 14:9) greatly strengthened them in their surrender to His plan for them. David had learned to know God as he watched over the sheep, and, though unrecognized by his brothers, this acquaintance made it possible for the Holy Spirit to lead him on from step to step.

12. *Goodly to look to.* Or, “handsome.”

Anoint him. Why does God choose certain men to be His representatives, passing others by? What difference was there in His choice of Saul and His choice of David? Being omniscient, God knew precisely the course Saul would take, yet anointed him and promised to be with him (ch. 10:7). Contrary to their own best interests and to His will for them, God answered the demand of the people for a king. It is clear that Saul was popular with the people—a king after their heart, but not God's. They were not thinking of spiritual leadership but of national strength. When chosen, Saul had serious handicaps. God recognized these, yet forewarned him of the dangers he would meet, and gave him definite counsel on how to meet them.

With David the case was different. There is no evidence that the people had become dissatisfied with Saul; in fact they were entirely satisfied with the results of the Amalekite campaign. David was the youngest in his father's house, and in the Orient age carried with it respect and priority (Gen. 29:25, 26). He was a stripling, with no claim to recognition even from the members of his own household (1 Sam. 17:28). He did not have the lofty stature of Saul, nor the physique of Samson. Saul was called from the plow in response to the urgent pleas of the elders for a king. He had little time for training.

David was called from tending sheep, while yet a lad, and had more than a decade in which to prepare for his arduous tasks as leader of the twelve tribes.

Chosen as a youth, David enjoyed the opportunity of a period of training and testing before he assumed the responsibilities of high office. Where David's character failed in meeting the divine standards, changes could thus be made before his coronation. God deals similarly with every individual whom He invites to be a member of His kingdom, and particularly with those whom he calls to positions of responsibility. All unconsciously man is tested by the common events of life until finally God can say, "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things" (Matt. 25:23). Thus far David had shown himself to possess youthful vigor, a loving, gentle spirit, and fearlessness born of confidence in divine power. He was uncorrupted by the world, a meditative soul growing up in the quiet seclusion of the hills of Bethlehem. There, herding the sheep like Moses in Midian, he acquired a sense of responsibility and developed qualities of leadership that were to carry him through life.

13. Horn. Heb. *qeren*, the "horn" of a bull, goat, or ram. The English word cornucopia is from *qeren* through the Latin *cornu*.

Spirit of the Lord. The Spirit of the Lord is no respecter of persons. He gave Saul a new heart and pointed out the pitfalls ahead of him. Yet Saul quickly rejected divine guidance. Now God proposed to guide David as He had tried in vain to guide Saul. As with many of the world's great leaders, David grew up amid humble surroundings, quietly developing a sterling character under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who one day would qualify him fully for the part he was to play in the great controversy between good and evil. God's Spirit "came upon David" at the time of his anointing, even as the Divine Spirit came upon Christ at His baptism (see on Matt. 3:16).

14. *Spirit of the Lord departed.* Saul had rejected the Spirit of God—committed the unpardonable sin—and there was nothing more God could do for him (see on ch. 15:35). It was not that the Spirit of Jehovah withdrew from Saul arbitrarily; but rather that Saul rebelled against His guidance, and deliberately withdrew himself from the influence of the Spirit. This must be understood in harmony with Ps. 139:7 and with the fundamental principle of free choice. If God through His Holy Spirit forced Himself upon Saul contrary to his desires, God would be making of the king a mere machine.

From the Lord. The Scriptures sometimes represent God as doing that which He does not specifically prevent. In giving Satan an opportunity to demonstrate his principles, God, in effect, would limit His own power. Of course, there were limits beyond which Satan could not go (see Job 1:12; 2:6), but within his limited sphere he did have divine permission to act. Thus, although his acts are contrary to the divine will, he can do nothing except what God permits him to do, and whatever he and his evil spirits may do, is done with God's permission. Therefore when God withdrew His own Spirit from Saul (see on 1 Sam. 16:13, 14), Satan was free to have his way.

Troubled him. Josephus describes the malady thus: "As for Saul, some strange and demoniacal disorders came upon him, and brought upon him such suffocations as were ready to choke him" (*Antiquities* vi. 8. 2). Evidently a severe melancholia developed as he brooded over the prophet's announcement that he had forfeited the crown to a man "better" than he was (ch. 15:28). Intermittent possession by the evil spirit led Saul to feel and act something like a demented man.

15. *An evil spirit from God.* See on v. 14 for an equivalent expression.

16. *An harp.* Better, “a lyre.” Saul was advised to seek relief through musical therapy. The sound of David’s lyre and his chanting of lofty hymns afforded Saul temporary release from the evil spirit that haunted him. As Saul listened to David’s music his wicked feelings of self-pity and jealousy left him for a time, only to return with double power as time went on. With his continued rejection of God’s guidance, he became like the man in Christ’s parable of demon possession (Luke 11:24–26), where “the last state” of such a soul proves to be far “worse than the first.”

17. *Provide me.* No means that offered hope of release from the evil spirit that tormented Saul was to be overlooked.

18. *Son of Jesse.* Apparently David’s reputation as a musician and a man of bravery, sound judgment, and tact was already established before his appearance at court and his victory over Goliath. David was probably a youth on the verge of manhood, for a little later, at the time of his encounter with Goliath, he is described both as a “boy,” Heb. *na‘ar* (“young man,” ch. 17:58), and as a “young man,” Heb. *‘elem* (“stripling,” v. 56).

Lord is with him. Though it was not generally known that David had been anointed king, nothing could hide the fact that the Holy Spirit, who had taken control of his life in a special way at the time of his anointing (see on v. 13), was successfully preparing him for the important tasks that lay ahead.

20. *An ass.* Jesse’s gift was intended to express good will with respect to the king’s desire for the services of David at court. Failure to send a gift would no doubt be interpreted as an expression of ill will, and would therefore prejudice David’s success at court.

21. *Stood before him.* This statement refers, not to David’s posture in the presence of Saul, but to the fact that David “entered his service” (RSV; see Gen. 41:46; Dan. 1:19). In the providence of God, David was thus brought into a situation where he would have contact with the leading men of the nation—who might thus learn to appreciate his talents—and with the affairs of government. Saul was probably permitted to remain on the throne until the seeds of evil in his life should produce their certain harvest, and until David’s preliminary training was complete.

Loved him greatly. Even Saul came to honor and respect the naturally attractive personality of David, and to esteem in him those qualities implanted there by the Holy Spirit. Saul recognized the obvious superiority of this promising young man, tacitly admitting the wisdom of God’s choice of a successor to the throne.

Armourbearer. Appointment to this position brought David into the closest possible relationship to the king and made him personally responsible for the king’s safety. It is possible that this statement is made in anticipation of David’s role at court after the victory over Goliath (see ch. 18:2, 5).

22. *Let David.* After a probationary period at court Saul makes what was at first intended to be nothing more than a temporary appointment, a permanent commission.

He hath found favour. See on v. 21. God looked on David’s heart and was satisfied that David would prove to be the kind of man He could use in His service (see v. 7). Looking only on the outward appearance and actions, which were in some degree mirrored in David’s heart, Saul came to the same conclusion (see Prov. 23:7).

23. *Saul was refreshed.* Literally, “Saul breathed.” The word *ruach* means “to breathe,” “to blow,” especially with the nostrils. The use of this verb implies a strong, forced exhalation of breath such as often accompanies relaxation after a period of tension,

followed by normal breathing. The fits of demon possession Saul suffered were apparently accompanied by physical and nervous tenseness.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–23PP 637–644

1–4PP 637

6, 7 Ed 266; PP 638

7 COL 72; CT 43, 44; PP 323; SC 39; TM 173; 1T 320; 2T 11, 34, 72, 418, 633; 3T 201, 244, 301; 5T 31, 333, 625, 658; 6T 197; 7T 88, 282; 8T 146

8–11PP 638

10 Ed 266

11–13MH 148; PP 592

12 CT 44; 6T 197

12, 13 PP 641

18 PP 644; 741

16–23PP 643

CHAPTER 17

1 *The armies of the Israelites and Philistines being ready to battle, 4 Goliath cometh proudly forth to challenge a combat. 12 David, sent by his father to visit his brethren, taketh the challenge. 28 Eliab chideth him. 30 He is brought to Saul. 32 He sheweth the reason of his confidence. 38 Without armour, armed by faith, he slayeth the giant. 55 Saul taketh notice of David.*

1. Shochoh. Correctly spelled Socoh in Joshua 15:35. The modern *Khirbet ‘Abbâd*, situated about halfway between Jerusalem and the Philistine city of Gath, was a town belonging to the tribe of Judah. It was about 17 mi. (27 km.) southwest of Jerusalem.

Ephes-dammim. Or, Pas-dammim, as in 1 Chron. 11:11–13, where the roster of David’s mighty men is given. The name is of uncertain meaning.

2. Valley of Elah. A fertile valley with gentle slopes rising on the east and the west, running for several miles in a northwesterly direction from Socoh.

3. A valley between them. The Valley of Elah has a wadi running through the center called the *Wadi es-Sant* spoken of in this verse as a “valley,” Heb. *gaye’*. This is quite different from the “valley,” Heb. *‘emeq*, of Elah (v. 2). The first Hebrew word is used of a ravine watered by a torrent during the rainy season, the latter, of a wide fertile valley. This *gaye’* was well-nigh impassable except at certain spots, and in this respect similar to the wadi in front of Michmash (see on ch. 14:4–10). Saul and his army encamped in the hills on the eastern side of this *gaye’*, and the Philistines fortified the hills to the west (see 1 Chron. 11:13).

4. Goliath. A resident of Gath, but probably not a Philistine except in the sense that he lived among that people. He is thought to have descended from the Anakim (see on Deut. 9:2). His height of 6 cu. and a span, or 6 1/2 cu., would be equivalent to 9 1/2 ft. (2.9 m.). Others have suggested that the name Goliath may mean “conspicuous.” But this, like “exile,” is based on the possibility that Goliath was a Semitic name.

Gath. One of the five chief towns of Philistia. The exact site is not known. (See on 2 Kings 12:17.)

5. Mail. Soldiers' body armor made of metal scales 2 to 8 in. long, sewn on a leather or fabric base. It protected the wearer's upper body. Wherever the metal parts did not meet perfectly, the wearer was vulnerable at that joint (1 Kings 22:34). Goliath's armor was of bronze.

Five thousand shekels. About 125 lb. (6.58 kg.).

6. Greaves. Thin plates of metal worn on the front of the leg below the knee. Greaves were worn by Greeks but not by Semitic or Egyptian soldiers. The Philistines, who came from Crete, may have adopted them from their Greek neighbors.

Target. Here, a javelin (RSV), evidently carried slung between the shoulders.

7. Spear's head. Its weight would be about 15 lb. (6.82 kg.). The ball used in the sport of shot-putting weighs 16 lb. (7.27 kg.). Although the champion's armor was bronze, the spear tip was iron, a relatively new and more expensive metal.

8. A Philistine. Literally, "the Philistine." The use of the definite article here implies egotism on the part of David's antagonist. He was proud of his ability and gloried in his distinguishing title. This title for Goliath is used more than 25 times in the chapter in contrast to his personal name, which is used but twice (vs. 4, 23). The Philistines knew, of course, of the superiority of Israel's Deity over Dagon (ch. 5:1–7). They had fled in terror from Mizpah (ch. 7:10–13). Then, after years of quiet (ch. 7:13), they had witnessed the surprise attack of Jonathan that deprived them of much war matériel (ch. 14:31, 32). Convinced against their will, the Philistines were of the same opinion still, and, finding a champion, decided to renew the attack.

9. If I prevail. It was often the custom in ancient times to decide tribal warfare by single combat, in which the army of the losing king or leader was considered to have been defeated. When Jehoshaphat went with Ahab to war against the Syrians, the king of Damascus commanded his captains to fight "only with the king of Israel" (1 Kings 22:31). This was not, however, in single combat. When the contest was waged between the house of Saul and that of David, 12 men were chosen from each side to determine the outcome. As a result "Abner was beaten" (2 Sam. 2:12–17), though he took no part in the conflict.

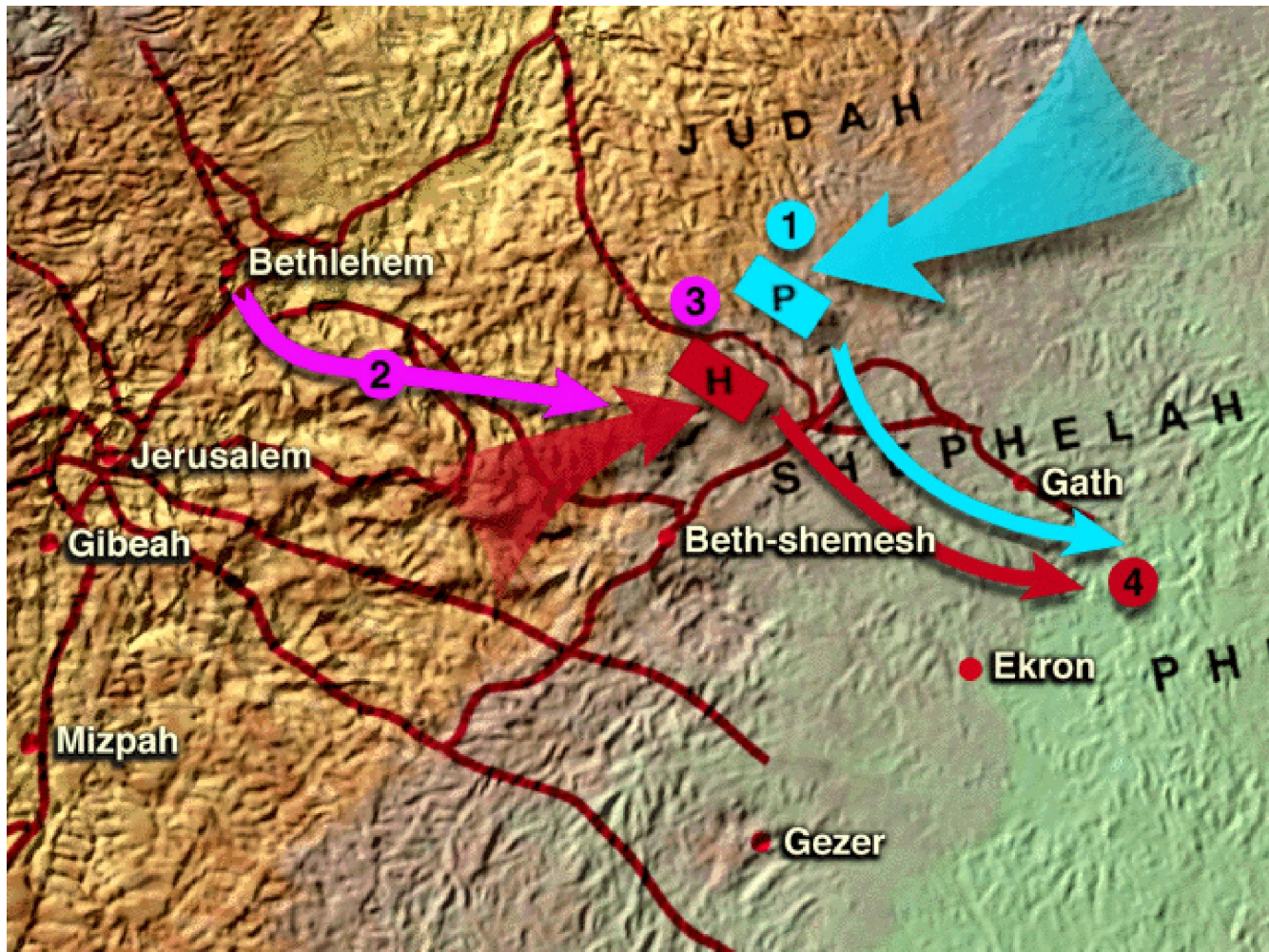
10. Defy. Literally, "reproach" or "taunt," that is, for not accepting Goliath's challenge. He branded the men of Israel as being most unsportsmanlike and cowardly. The wadi separating the opposing forces was so difficult to cross that if either side ventured a frontal attack it was almost sure of defeat. The Philistines were so confident that no physical match could be found for their champion that they proposed to decide the battle by single combat. This challenge continued daily for more than a month (v. 16).

11. They were dismayed. In ch. 2:10 this same verb form is translated, "broken to pieces." The primary meaning is "to be shattered," in reference to either a mental or physical state. Here Saul, an egotistical despot, was confronted by another braggart, and knew not what to do. Furthermore, Saul was a giant among his own people, and was the logical one to accept the challenge. He stood head and shoulders above his fellows and had a bronze helmet and coat of mail (v. 38), yet trembled before Goliath. Although he had forfeited the presence and protection of the Spirit of God, he realized that he must win this stalemate or lose face with his people. His spirit was broken, his conscience troubled him, and he realized that the dilemma in which he had placed himself and his army was becoming more difficult with every passing hour. The length of the deep ravine running through the Valley of Elah could not be more than a few miles. This would

indicate that the contending armies were not very large, or before a month had passed one side or the other would have made a flanking movement around the ends of the valley.

Battle of David and Goliath

4



15. David went and returned. It is not clear whether this refers to David's attendance at court to play and sing for Saul, or to repeated trips to and from the Israelite camp to carry food. The fact that the statement occurs in the context of the Goliath narrative would seem to imply the latter explanation. David may have been a member of the supply train to provide food for the men at the front. On the other hand, vs. 13–15 may explain why David—already placed at the court of Saul according to the preceding chapter (ch. 16:19–23)—was now at home rather than with Saul. The author of 1 Samuel perhaps felt it necessary to explain this fact for his readers, and did so by stating that David was not permanently attached to Saul's court but appeared there only occasionally. The author

⁴Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Sa 13:4). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

notes further that David was but a youth (ch. 17:14, 42, 56), in contrast to his older brothers, who “followed Saul” (v. 14).

Commentators are not agreed as to whether this engagement with the Philistines occurred before or after David went to court to play for Saul (ch. 16:18–23). The fact that Saul later did not recognize David (ch. 17:55–58), together with the repetitions of the names of his brothers in ch. 17:13, 14 (see ch. 16:6–11), rather indicates that the sequence of these chapters could be reversed without encountering any serious chronological difficulty. Many times the Bible carries one thought or account on to its conclusion before returning to take up another thread of argument or narrative, in order to make each unit complete in itself (see on Gen. 25:19; 27:1; 35:29; Ex. 16:33, 35; 18:25). If such be the case here, the statement of Saul’s courtier concerning David as “a mighty valiant man, and a man of war” (1 Sam. 16:18) would appear more meaningful. On the other hand, if David had already slain Goliath, the speaker would probably have referred to him as the great national hero (ch. 18:5–9). But if David had already distinguished himself as the victor over Goliath, would Saul have needed to be told who David was? Furthermore, from the time David slew Goliath, “Saul took him . . . , and would let him go no more home to his father’s house” (ch. 18:2; cf. PP 649). Yet when Saul sent to Jesse for David to play and sing at court he referred to David as “thy son, which is with the sheep” (ch. 16:19), and even at the beginning of the Goliath narrative David was tending sheep at Bethlehem (ch. 17:15). See also on chs. 17:55; 18:1.

16. Forty days. For more than a month Goliath made his daily challenge. The fact that during this time the Philistines had made no attempt to outflank the army of Israel implies that since their disastrous defeat at Michmash the Philistines had not been strong enough for a full-scale attack. They were now relying on intimidation and the possibility of victory through single combat. This conclusion is strengthened by their precipitous retreat once Goliath was vanquished.

17. Corn. That is, grain, probably barley or wheat.

18. The captain. Thought for the captain of the regiment in which Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah served was designed to lead him to notice and look with favor on these three privates in his force.

Take their pledge. Or, “bring some token from them” (RSV).

20. David rose up early. It was a distance of only about 15 mi. by the road from Bethlehem to Socoh. Familiar with the country, David probably knew of short cuts that would reduce the traveling distance considerably (see Battle of David and Goliath). It would seem that he was not more than four or five hours in making the journey. Perhaps it was late morning when David arrived, about the time Goliath strode forth to make his challenge (see v. 16).

Trench. Or, “encampment” (RSV). Trench warfare was not practiced in ancient times.

22. Carriage. In modern English, “baggage.”

26. Who is this uncircumcised Philistine? Literally, “Who is the Philistine, this uncircumcised [one]?” David gave emphatic utterance to his disdain for the giant who held Saul and his men in terror. With faith in God, a faith that Saul might also have had, David was not in the least impressed by Goliath’s stature. Had Saul been obedient to God the victory might well have been his own; but God could not trust him with victory such as this. Goliath is referred to throughout the chapter as “the Philistine.” David could

scarcely hide his contempt for such a braggart. Even his brother's reproach (v. 28) did not deter him. He heard the story of Goliath from many mouths, and spoke so earnestly that the news was soon carried to Saul.

32. *David said to Saul.* What a contrast—a humble shepherd lad encouraging an experienced and successful warrior of Israel! Saul, the only giant of Israel (ch. 10:23), realized that he should have been the one to accept Goliath's challenge. But a guilty conscience left him fearful and trembling. Had love for God been in his heart it would have been sufficient to cast out all fear; but he had none of the love of God abiding in him. In its place there was only the "torment" of a guilty conscience (see 1 John 2:5; 4:18). David, on the other hand, radiated that spirit of genuine optimism and courage that is the badge of "a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16; cf. Ps. 51:10, 11). David was as courageous as Saul was cowardly.

36. *He hath defied.* David was jealous for the good name of Israel and Israel's God, as Moses had been before him (Ex. 32:12, 13; Num. 14:13–16; Deut. 9:26–29; cf. Eze. 20:9). The inactivity of God's people in a time of shame and crisis was more than David could endure.

37. *He will deliver.* Saul had once asked great things of God and had attempted great things for Him. However, pride and self-glory had filled his heart, and now every obstacle appeared insurmountable. In his effort to vindicate himself he had forgotten that with God all things are possible. How could God better impress upon him his lack than by letting David rehearse the providential protection that had been over him personally in the past. The Spirit of God once took possession of Saul. Now he would have the opportunity of seeing what he himself might have been had he not rebelled against that Spirit. Again he was in a dilemma. If he refused to let David fight, the army would expect him, as king, to champion their cause. If he let David fight, and Goliath killed him, the battle would be lost and Israel would again be in bondage to the Philistines. It was to save his own life and reputation that Saul sent David forth to combat. But the very means Saul used in an effort to save his reputation as king and leader resulted in its loss (ch. 18:6–9). It became apparent that without God, Saul was powerless before his enemies (ch. 14:24; cf. 15:23), and that past victories for which he had personally taken credit were from God.

38. *Saul armed David.* Saul was in earnest and did all that was in his power to assure David of success. He trusted his armor; David trusted God (see v. 45).

39. *He assayed to go.* Or, "he tried in vain to go" (RSV).

I have not proved them. Or, "I am not used to them" (RSV). Saul was a coward! He had armor, but knew he could not meet Goliath in his own physical strength. With ostensible prudence he at first refused David permission to fight because of his youth. Then he gave further evidence of his folly by attempting to give his own armor to David.

David's courteous reply, "I have not proved them," is evidence of (1) his faith in other equipment that he had previously tested, and (2) his reliance on past experience in meeting new situations as they arose (see LS 196). David ascribed to the power of God victory even over wild animals. Danger had developed in him a sanctified courage, and faithfulness in little things had effectively prepared him for greater trusts. He had proved to be a trustworthy shepherd over his father's sheep; now he was called to champion the cause of his heavenly Father's flock (see Eze. 34:5, 23; 37:24; Matt. 9:36; 25:33; John 10:12, 13). The procedure he chose was determined by his own spiritual convictions

rather than by the unsanctified judgment of others, irrespective of position. How much depends upon purity of motive when one is going forth on a perilous enterprise! David could not fight in Saul's armor—he must be himself. God designs that every man shall work in his own harness. We see a man in public life who takes well with the people, and we copy his mannerisms, hoping to find success through them. But God wants men who will be themselves, men who will learn from each day's experience what they need to know in order to solve tomorrow's problems. Thank God for men who dare to use the equipment God has provided them.

44. *I will give thy flesh.* Probably a common, formal challenge to combat (see Rev. 19:17, 18).

45. *Thou comest ... I come.* Here is a definite contrast between two distinct ways of life. Goliath represents the carnal security of personal strength, the pride of self-aggrandizement, the vanity of popular acclaim, the untamable fierceness of human passion. David manifests quiet trust in divine strength and the determination to glorify God by carrying out His will. David's motive, expressed here and later in his life, was not to have his own way, nor to become famous in the eyes of his fellow men, but "that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" (v. 46).

50. *So David prevailed.* How quickly one test followed another. This was David's third victory in the one day. His first victory came when he was taunted by Eliab as being unfit for aught but caring for sheep. He might have made a justly sharp retort, but refused to reply in kind. Calmly composed, he merely said, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?" (v. 29). Such a character is not born in a moment. Had he not learned patience with his sheep, he could not have been shown patience with his jealous brothers. By ignoring the opportunity of entering into a petty quarrel, David showed himself a master of his own spirit. Thus it was with Christ, who, having demonstrated His meekness under the worst provocation, said, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:29). Only thus can any man become a true leader and guide of others.

David won his second victory when he was escorted into the presence of his king. Looking at the spirited youth, the king could not help contrasting the youthful blitheness and lack of military training with the cunning of the old-timer at war games. If Saul, with all his commanding personality, had refrained from the combat with Goliath, how could a stripling like David attempt it (1 Sam. 17:33)? Never dreaming of the possibility of a supernatural intervention, Saul planted seeds of doubt in David's mind, and tempted him to wear the king's own armor. But again with courteous deference, David won the victory over doubt by adhering to his Heaven-inspired purpose of maintaining faith in, and total dependence on, the Lord.

All of this prepared him well for his third victory—that over the Philistine, who was the very personification of blasphemy. It was a victory of spiritual forces over material brute strength. In view of the events of previous months, how necessary it was that Israel be taught this lesson! In reply to Goliath's curse, David exultantly cried, "I come to thee in the name of the ... God of the armies of Israel" (v. 45). A simple stone from the brook plus a lad's skill and his confiding trust in the eternal God gave the Israelites a lesson they were never to forget, even though they seldom emulated it.

51. *They fled.* The perfidy of the Philistines became apparent the moment their champion was slain. They had promised to become the servants of the Israelites in the

event that Goliath should be killed (v. 9). By running away they forfeited the consideration proposed in their own challenge to the army of Saul, and demonstrated, furthermore, that had Goliath been victorious they would have dealt unmercifully with Israel. Death would have been preferable to the slavery they had proposed as a gesture of magnanimity.

53. *They spoiled their tents.* Rather, “their camp.” When Israel pursued the foe, now scattering in all directions, they also probably devastated towns to the rear of the line of battle and killed many in addition to the Philistines at Socoh. Josephus (*Antiquities* vi. 9. 5) says they slew 30,000 and wounded twice as many more.

54. *To Jerusalem.* That is, eventually. David would not have taken the head to Jerusalem immediately, for the Jebusites still held that city, and it was not taken from them until after the coronation of David (see 1 Chron. 11:4–8; 2 Sam. 5:6–9). The historian here records the ultimate resting place of this trophy, without thought of the time element involved. Goliath’s armor apparently was taken to David’s home at Bethlehem (see on 2 Sam. 18:17; see also 1 Sam. 4:10; 13:2; etc.), and his sword, apparently to Nob (see ch. 21:9).

55. *Whose son?* See on ch. 18:1, 2.

I cannot tell. It is evident that Abner had not previously been acquainted with David, and that therefore David was not too well known at court. He had, apparently, been brought in only as a visiting musician, and had not become a member of the court (see PP 643).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–58PP 644–648; 3T 218–220

4–83T 218

4–10PP 646

13 PP 644

15 Ed 152, 164

17, 18, 20, 26, 28 PP 645

29, 32 PP 646

32 3T 219

34, 35 DA 479; PP 644

37 PP 646

38, 39 Ev 684

38–47PP 647

39–473T 219

47 3T 269

48–54PP 648

CHAPTER 18

1 *Jonathan loveth David. 5 Saul envieth his praise, 10 seeketh to kill him in his fury, 12 feareth him for his good success, 17 offereth him his daughters for a snare. 22 David persuaded to be the king’s son in law, giveth two hundred foreskins of the Philistines for Michal’s dowry. 28 Saul’s hatred, and David’s glory increaseth.*

1. *Made an end.* The narrative continues without a break. Saul, having promised attractive rewards to the slayer of Goliath (ch. 17:25), now called for David and inquired as to his identity. If we insert ch. 16:14–23 between vs. ch. 9 and 10 of 18, as some scholars do, Saul’s first contact with David would thus be at the battle front, and the

reason for Saul's mental disturbance would lie in the adulation David received from the populace (vs. 7>6, 7). If, however, the account is in chronological order, Saul's question (ch. 17:55) might be explained by supposing that Saul had taken so little notice of the humble lyre player during his spells of abstraction that he did not know who David was, in which case ch. 16:21 would be regarded as mentioning later developments. The latter seems preferable (see on ch. 16:21). In either case, since David was both a military hero and an inspired musician, it would be small wonder that Saul "let him go no more home to his father's house" (ch. 18:2). See also on ch. 17:15.

The soul of Jonathan. The touching friendship between David and Jonathan is the classic example of kindred spirits recognizing in each other like ideals and rejoicing in the contact. Jonathan had already expressed dislike for his father's attitude and course of action (ch. 14:29). To him, David's humble and spiritual replies to Saul's questions, giving God all the glory for past achievements, were like cool, refreshing water to a weary and thirsty traveler. To Jonathan, the hero of Michmash, there must have come lonely hours of disappointment and frustration because of his father's lack of spiritual insight. Little did Jonathan realize that, all unknown to himself, the same faith in God and surrender to His guidance and protection were shaping another life a few miles to the south.

2. *Saul took him.* David became a courtier to Saul, permanently attached to the royal household. The narrative of ch. 16:14–23 could hardly follow this action on the part of Saul (see on ch. 18:1).

3. *A covenant.* Probably made at a subsequent time and recorded here by way of introduction to the narrative of the friendship of David and Jonathan. The pact of friendship must have been the result of conversations unnumbered, of expeditions carried out together, of mature affection. In the lovely friendship of these two devoted, ardent spirits it is our privilege to behold something of the feelings of Christ as one day He beholds in the lives of His redeemed ones the same spiritual vision, the same humility of soul, the same calmness of spirit, the same obedience to eternal principles of truth, that possessed His own heart while here on earth. Seeing thus the intense travail of His soul, He will be satisfied (Isa. 53:11). What a joy heaven will be for kindred souls, with an eternity for companionship.

4. *Jonathan stripped himself.* His love for David was so great that he was prepared to say, as John the Baptist did centuries later, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). He beheld in David what he had once dreamed he might become. All the commendable traits of the two characters were cemented together by true affection, and Jonathan awoke to the fact that happiness consists in loving rather than in being loved. Christ so loved us that He voluntarily divested Himself of every divine prerogative (Phil. 2:6–8) that He might plant the leaven of truth in every man (John 1:9).

5. *Went out whithersoever.* Like Moses in the courts of Pharaoh, David received training in administrative affairs that was to stand him in good stead in years to come. He was placed in a position where he could see life from all its varied angles, and was given spiritual insight that he might distinguish between right and wrong. Like Daniel, David maintained his integrity in an environment not of his own choosing; nor did he fear contamination. God does not hesitate to place His servants in the very vortex of human selfishness, knowing that the darker the night, the brighter their light will shine forth.

David, who had been a dutiful son in the house of his father, Jesse, now proved his worth as a loyal ambassador for the king.

Set him over. Saul was true to his promise to honor the man willing to accept the challenge his own soldiers had declined. Though little more than a youth, David conducted himself with such commendable discretion that he was readily accepted by all. His excellent traits of character were obvious. This does not mean that he replaced Abner, who had been, and still was, captain of the armed forces.

8. What can he have more? No time interval is given between the announcement of God's choice of another man, "better than thou" (ch. 15:28), as king, and this present experience of David in the court of the king. Though it is probable that several years had passed, Saul would certainly be on the watch for signs of the man who was to succeed him (see v. 9). He had recently proved powerless before the Philistines, and had it not been for the courageous exploit of this shepherd lad he might have lost his own life. Yet, he resented the thought that this lad whom he had honored and associated closely with himself might be winning away from him the affections of the people and the army as well. What kind of gratitude would that be? Time had not eased the smart of the prophetic rebuke (see ch. 15:23). Saul again gave way to feelings of discontent and evil surmisings until his jealous mind finally became deranged.

10. The evil spirit. See on ch. 16:15, 16. Though God permits temptation to come, He never entices men to sin (James 1:13; cf. 1 Cor. 10:13).

He prophesied. Perhaps, "he raved" (RSV). The verb form that occurs here, though it is often used of true prophecy, may also refer to the mutterings of false prophets. Saul's ecstatic frenzy was due to a spirit of violent passion, perhaps with the hope of impressing his courtiers with his holiness.

David played. What a contrast between these two men! Actuated by jealous fury, Saul grasped his javelin with deliberate design to slay David. David, probably sensing danger and realizing the cause of Saul's passion, held his harp, with which he sought to relieve the king's mental tension.

12. Saul was afraid. Saul's reason for fearing David was his conviction that God had departed from him in favor of David. But had the Lord deliberately departed from Saul, or had the king forsaken his heavenly Father? Because He has given man the power of free choice, God will not restrain him by force if he rejects counsel. Adam forsook God when he yielded to the suggestions of the adversary. Did God forsake him? Paul deliberately persecuted the church of Christ. Did God forsake him? If so, how could Paul later affirm "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15)?

Through David's ministry, the Lord was appealing to the hardened heart of Saul, inviting him to return and realize the healing power of God in his behalf. Though Saul had irretrievably disqualified himself as king, he might yet find salvation as an individual (see on ch. 15:23, 35).

13. Saul removed him. From his own selfish point of view, one of the great mistakes of Saul's life was when he removed David from his court and made him "captain over a thousand." No more would the melody of David's music ease Saul's affliction. No other was able to uphold the king's hand before the public as David had done, going "whithersoever Saul sent him" (v. 5). Obsessed by a desire to kill David, Saul did the

very thing that made it harder for him to humble his heart and return to his heavenly Father.

14. Behaved himself wisely. Or, “was successful,” as the form of the Hebrew verb implies. The mistakes of men in power in dealing with their subordinates may easily be used by those subordinates as steppingstones to success if they wisely conduct themselves. David accepted his demotion—for such it seems to have been—in all humility, and in his new role won the admiration of all Israel. There were no recriminations, nor was there self-pity due to the unjust treatment. David remained the same bright, spiritual-minded soul he had always been. Greatly beloved by the Lord, he was, in spite of the wrath of the king, receiving just the training he needed before stepping into the responsibilities of leadership. God adapts the discipline of life to the peculiar needs of each individual who purposes to be true to duty.

16. Went out and came in. The duties assigned to David were such as to keep him constantly in the public eye.

17. Be thou valiant for me. Here two distinct personalities stand forth in sharp contrast, the cunning duplicity of Saul against the simplicity and straightforward conduct of David. Not only did Saul’s conscience trouble him, but secretly he was also afraid of the people, who loved David and were vocal in their expressions of loyalty to him. Jealous of every word of praise favoring the youth, Saul resorted to double-dealing—the stock in trade of selfish men—open flattery, and secret plotting. At first David seems to have been unaware of the snares set for him. He accepted both promotion and demotion in the same spirit of cooperative humility. His heart being pure before God, he was concerned only with the efficient discharge of every task assigned him, and calmly indifferent to personal danger.

Let not mine hand. Saul was not ready, yet, to take David’s life directly. He hoped to accomplish his purpose indirectly, in order to avoid the ill will of the people.

18. Who am I? Evidently Merab, the elder daughter of Saul—her name means, “increase,” “multiplication” (see Isa. 9:6, 7)—had been promised to David as part of the reward for killing Goliath (1 Sam. 17:25), or in the hope of persuading him to accept the hazard of further attacks on the Philistines. David’s hesitancy in marrying Merab may have arisen from the fact that he was not in a position to provide the required dowry.

19. She was given. At first nettled by David’s refusal, Saul could not hide his growing dislike for the newly appointed captain; he gave Merab to Adriel—“my help is God,” presuming the word to be Aramaic.

The Meholathite. Abel-meholah, the birthplace of Elisha, was a town not far from Beth-shan (1 Kings 4:12; 19:16), probably east of the Jordan at *Tell el Maqlub*, a site formerly identified with Jabesh-gilead (see on Judges 7:22). Saul’s duplicity should have opened David’s eyes, but because he yet looked on others as being sincere like himself, he meekly submitted to Saul’s cancellation of the first marriage contract.

21. Be a snare. In his daughter Michal the scheming Saul saw an opportunity yet to carry out his nefarious plan for David’s destruction. He would require such a dowry as would in all probability accomplish his purpose in an even better way than would have been possible had he given Merab to David. Saul was greatly pleased but had to move carefully, for David must not know that Michal was in love with him.

One of the twain. Or, “a second time” (RSV), with reference to this being Saul’s second proposition to David.

22. Commanded his servants. Having deliberately taken Merab from David, Saul proceeded by underhand methods to inform the youth that he still wanted him for his son-in-law. He arranged to snare David by means of a court whispering campaign. The servants themselves probably did not realize the part they were unconsciously playing in the drama.

23. I am a poor man. Perhaps David here gave expression to his perplexity over Saul's double dealing. Still, he was not bitter, probably thinking Saul's decision was due to his own poverty.

25. Not any dowry. David's interest had been aroused in so tactful a way as to arouse no suspicion. In fact, the idea greatly appealed to him. He could thus at once avenge Israel against her longstanding enemy and win the hand of a young woman who may have seemed more suitable to him than even her older sister, but who perhaps might not be married before the first-born (see Gen. 29:26). Inasmuch as marriage arrangements were made by the parents, David sensed nothing wrong in Saul's intentions.

An hundred foreskins. Egyptian reliefs depict piles of these, cut from fallen foes, brought to the king, and counted before him as evidence of victory. Saul's proposal was thus in accord with contemporary pagan custom.

26. The days were not expired. Rather, "before the days were expired." This clause belongs to v. 27.

27. Two hundred men. Saul had stipulated 100. The king had publicized the matter so widely that he was forced this time to live up to his own bargain. Thus God again directed Saul's attention to the man whom it was His pleasure to honor.

29. David's enemy. Chagrin at the failure of his evil scheme intensified Saul's hatred of David. But instead of yielding to God, Saul grieved over wounded pride. David's prestige was greater than ever. Now, fully possessed by an evil spirit, Saul's darkly brooding mind assiduously sought a new snare for his enemy, now his own son-in-law.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-30PP 649-652

1 Ed 157

1-5PP 649

6-8PP 650

13-16PP 651

17-25, 28PP 652

CHAPTER 19

1 *Jonathan discloseth his father's purpose to kill David.* 4 *He persuadeth his father to reconciliation.* 8 *By reason of David's good success in a new war, Saul's malicious rage breaketh out against him.* 12 *Michal deceiveth her father with an image in David's bed.* 18 *David cometh to Samuel in Naioth.* 20 *Saul's messengers sent to take David, 22 and Saul himself, prophesy.*

1. Kill David. Literally, "cause David to die." Saul decided to make David the target of a political purge and discussed the matter with Jonathan and some of his government officials. No doubt he assured them immunity from punishment.

This was Saul's fifth attempt to do away with David: (1) He threw his javelin at David (ch. 18:10, 11). (2) Then he tried to accomplish his evil design by placing David at the front in the hope that he would be killed (ch. 18:17). (3) Next, Saul deceived him by promising him Merab but giving her to another, perhaps hoping that David would act

rashly as a result and might be punished (ch. 18:19). (4) After that, he gave David permission to earn the dowry for Michal by a dangerous mission (ch. 18:25). (5) Now, it being evident that the Lord was with David, Saul sought the help of others to kill him.

3. *I will commune.* Adversity proves the sincerity of true friendship. Jonathan well knew that David had no thought of usurping the throne, but was unable to convince Saul of that fact. Jonathan's position was not easy, for he would be in the role of opposing the desires of a tyrant, and would be thought disloyal to his own father. However, as a true friend, Jonathan told David the truth about Saul, not to frighten, but to forewarn and assure him of a true friend's allegiance. This was a real test for Jonathan. Jonathan had to decide between loyalty to his father and loyalty to David. It was impossible longer to be loyal to both. He demonstrated good judgment by conducting himself in such a way as to retain influence over his father and yet at the same time save David from certain death.

4. *Let not the king sin.* Bound to his friend by ties even closer than those of blood relationship, with a love "passing the love of women" (2 Sam. 1:26), and knowing the innermost thoughts of David's heart, Jonathan was ideally fitted to mediate between him and Saul. In Jonathan's plea to his father, respect for authority and strict regard for principle were both manifested. As Saul's son, he knew the arguments that would have the most weight with the king—David's victory over Goliath and his continued, loyal service to the king personally on all occasions.

5. *Without a cause.* Jonathan tactfully proved to Saul that he had no reason for slaying David, by reminding him that he had every reason to appreciate David's loyal service.

6. *Saul hearkened.* How effective are right words at the right moment (see Prov. 25:11; Isa. 50:4)! Jonathan knew his father was wrong, not only in this instance, but in many others as well. But he would have gained nothing had he berated his father for his mistakes.

8. *A great slaughter.* Providence provided Saul with further evidence of David's loyalty and the value of his services.

9. *The evil spirit.* See on ch. 16:14, 15. The devil had known ever since the time of David's anointing that he was being trained for kingship. Hence the evil one might be expected to attempt to thwart God's plan. He could have conceived no more effective means of doing so than by convincing Saul that David sought to usurp the kingdom.

10. *Escaped that night.* In accordance with Hebrew narrative style the final results of David's escape are given and then more details are added. David did not escape at once; he first went briefly to his home.

11. *To night.* The narrative does not state how Michal learned of Saul's command to kill David. She may have seen the officers lying in wait for David, and, knowing the character of her father, perceived his purpose. Or, perhaps, David was impressed to confide in her. Perhaps David was thinking of this experience when he fervently sang, "A man's goings are established of Jehovah" (Ps. 37:23, ASV). Imagine David out on the mountainside, homeless and hunted like a wild animal! But after a night of weeping David could say, "I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning; for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble" (Ps. 59:16. See title of this psalm).

12. *Through a window.* The word translated "window" comes from a verb meaning "to bore," "to pierce." Anciently, houses were usually built in such a way that all openings faced a walled-in courtyard, except for one main outside entrance. Often the

roofs were flat and could be reached either from the inside of the house or from the courtyard. The record does not state whether the opening through which Michal let down David was onto the roof, or whether it overlooked the rear of the house. In any case it was at some point opposite the front entrance, where the emissaries from the king stood watch. The spies were let down from the walls of Jericho in a similar way (Joshua 2:15); Paul was let down over the wall at Damascus (Acts 9:25); the disciples opened the flat roof to let the paralytic down in the presence of Jesus (Luke 5:19). The wisdom of Michal's prompt action became apparent when the officers commissioned to arrest David clamored for admission the next morning.

There are times when the cause of right can be advanced better by flight than by fighting. Some may think that inasmuch as God had anointed David, and Saul had so far departed from right as to attempt murder, it would have been better for David to stand his ground. Heretofore he had never turned his back to an enemy. Had he faced Saul in the same spirit that he met Goliath, he could not have failed to draw many of the people to his side; but such an action would have led to civil war, for Saul was also popular and many obeyed him implicitly. As events later proved, it was seven years after the death of Saul before David was accepted by all Israel. As with David, so with Christ. Fearless and unafraid, the Saviour could have summoned the armies of heaven to His aid. Instead, He permitted evil men to have their day.

13. An image. Heb. *teraphim* (see on Gen. 31:19; Lev. 19:31). An image of sufficient size to be mistaken for a man is most unusual.

A pillow. The word here translated "pillow" does not appear elsewhere in the OT, and its meaning is uncertain. The fact that the "pillows" of ancient times were usually solid, and made of wood, clay, stone, or metal (see on Gen. 28:11), suggests that the object here referred to was something other than a "pillow." It may have been a sort of wig made of black goat's hair attached to the head of the image, in imitation of human hair.

For his bolster. Or, "at its head" (RSV).

14. He is sick. Although David may literally have been "sick," it seems more likely that Michal told a deliberate falsehood. If so, her action could hardly be condoned in spite of the fact that David was thereby given more time to make good his escape (see vs. 15, 16).

17. Why hast thou deceived me? Saul had been pleased to use Michal as a decoy to lure David on to his death; now he was highly incensed that his own daughter should be loyal to David rather than to him. Outwitted, he feared lest he lose face with his officers. Michal had evidently inherited some of her father's traits; she did not hesitate to offer the excuse that her husband had threatened to kill her. This falsehood gave Saul an excuse to pursue with increased vigor his purpose to slay David, who, it appeared, had now threatened his daughter. If David would dare to kill his own wife, there could be no safety for any of the royal family till he was out of the way. Her falsehood, however, was the result of Saul's training, and he had only himself to blame. Laban's example of deceit similarly returned to plague him (Gen. 31:14–20, 35). Laban, Jacob, and Saul all proved the truth of Christ's statement, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. 7:2).

18. Came to Samuel. David was doubtless greatly perplexed over the conduct of God's appointed leader, Saul. Why did God permit Saul to continue as king? Was God particular? Had He deserted the nation? The tabernacle and its services at Shiloh had

been discontinued; the ark was in a Levite's home in Kirjath-jearim. Could it be that all these centuries of service and religion had been a hoax? Was there really a God in heaven? Did He have a plan for Israel? Why should he, David, give up his work with the sheep to assist in the development of the kingdom if the high standards he had always cherished were to be cast aside? What was there to gain in fighting the Philistines if the king was determined to murder the one who had obtained the victory? David dared not lift his hand against the Lord's anointed (ch. 24:6, 10), yet what to do he could not say. See David's Wanderings When Fleeing from Saul: a. and b.

Thoroughly frightened because of Saul's attempt on his life, David naturally sought counsel from the one who had called him from the sheepfold to a place of responsibility in Israel, and had, possibly, taught him at Ramah. With Samuel he would feel as safe from Saul as if there had been a sanctuary to which he might flee (see 1 Kings 1:50–53; 2:28–34).

Dwelt in Naioth. Perhaps, literally, “sat in the lodgings,” but the meaning of Naioth is uncertain. The verb *yashab*, “to dwell,” also means “to sit,” as a king on his throne or a judge before his court or a teacher before his class. These “lodgings” were in Ramah (vs. 19, 22, 23), perhaps a dormitory Samuel had erected for the young men in training at his school. David found Samuel in Ramah, instructing his students rather than away on his annual circuit (1 Sam. 7:16, 17).

20. Saul sent messengers. Three times Saul's will was frustrated by the conduct of the men he sent to fetch David to Gibeah (see v. 21). Each group, in succession, was restrained by the Holy Spirit from arresting David, and joined in with the activities of the school of the prophets instead.

Appointed over them. Or, “head over them” (RSV), that is, head of the school.

23. Spirit of God. It was not more than 7 or 8 mi. from Gibeah to Ramah. Saul was so infuriated by the day's proceedings that he determined finally to kill David with his own hand, regardless of consequences (see PP 653, 654). The power of the Spirit was so strong, however, that Saul was led to reveal to all the perfidy of his soul, and the wrath of man was made to praise God.

24. Prophesied before Samuel. Once before, at his anointing, Saul had joined with the prophets, and his sincerity of purpose brought about a transformation of heart (ch. 10:5–11). Now, his wrath was again restrained and he was given clear evidence that God was protecting David. Josephus says, “He was disordered in mind, and under the vehement agitation of a spirit; and, putting off his garments, he fell down, and lay on the ground all that day and night, in the presence of Samuel and David” (*Antiquities* vi. 11. 5).

Naked. The word thus translated may mean completely naked (Job 1:21), ragged or poorly clothed (Job 22:6; 24:7, 10; Isa. 58:7), or, possibly clad in a tunic, the mantle itself laid aside (cf. Isa. 20:2). Here, it is probably used in the latter sense; in other words, Saul laid aside his royal robe and was clothed only in his tunic, an inner garment commonly worn at home. On the street the outer robe, or cloak, was usually worn over it. By removing his royal robe Saul would probably be dressed more nearly like one of the students in the school.

Perhaps here the Holy Spirit pleaded with Saul personally for the last time. There may have come from his lips not only a confession of the justice of David's cause but also condemnation of his own willful acts. In the final judgment day the great adversary

of souls will admit the justice of God's great plan of salvation and the error of his own ways (see Phil. 2:10, 11). But the old jealousies and enmities will return and break forth in one great final expression of hatred and fury (see GC 671, 672). Thus it was with Saul in his animosity toward David. Returning once more, the evil spirit that had controlled him so long found his heart empty of the grace of God and took an even more firm hold of him than before (see Matt. 12:44, 45).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–24PP 652–654

2–10PP 652

11, 12, 18–22PP 653

23, 24 PP 654

CHAPTER 20

1 *David consulteth with Jonathan for his safety.* 11 *Jonathan and David renew their covenant by oath.* 18 *Jonathan's token to David.* 24 *Saul, missing David, seeketh to kill Jonathan.* 35 *Jonathan lovingly taketh his leave of David.*

1. David fled. Evidently to Gibeah to confer with Jonathan. David would hardly have dared to return thither while Saul was there, but under the restraining power of the Spirit, Saul remained at Ramah for most of the day and night (see ch. 19:23, 24). The delay gave David an opportunity to find Jonathan and to learn from him the attitude of Saul. No mention is made of David's visiting his wife at this time. He was confident that Jonathan would keep his counsel, but he was not too certain of Michal. See David's Wanderings When Fleeing from Saul: a. and b.

Mine iniquity. The two words, "iniquity" and "sin," are hardly repetitious synonyms. The word *'awon*, translated "iniquity," comes from the root *'awah*, "to be of a perverse mind." *'Awon* often comprehends the guilt and punishment of sin. The word *chatta'ah*, translated "sin," comes from the root *chata'*, "to miss the mark." David was asking, What is my guilt and wherein have I been perverse in my attitude either toward the king or toward the kingdom? Have I not wrought for Saul under most trying conditions? Have I not done valiant service for Israel, fighting her enemies? Have not my motives and desires always been to bring success to my beloved people? Where have I missed the mark and failed in my purpose?

2. God forbid. Heb. *chalilah*, used as an exclamation of abhorrence, a protest. The Deity's name is not in the Hebrew. The rendering "far be it" is to be preferred, as in v. 9. The expression "God forbid" is an old English idiom of protestation, which does not literally translate the Hebrew. Jonathan seems to be sure that his father's actions are due to his mental derangement. He assures David that Saul will do nothing in secret, as was evidenced previously when he spoke to Jonathan and his officers about killing David (ch. 19:1). Jonathan had been able to reason with Saul then and quiet him, and he was sure there was a solution to the problem now. But, after seeing Saul's attitude at the student lodgings at Ramah, David was not convinced.

3. David sware. That is, he affirmed with an oath that he knew whereof he spoke. David called Jonathan's attention to the fact that Saul knew of their close friendship, and although Jonathan had been able to reason with his father in the past, David now feared that Saul would go on with his evil plans so secretly that he would not talk the matter

over with anyone, let alone his own son. Perhaps Jonathan had not seen his father immediately before the Ramah experience and did not know of the sudden change for the worse.

Step. Heb. *peša'*. The word occurs only here in the OT. Its use in the phrase is an illustration of a colloquialism comparable to our modern idioms. Such expressions lend color to the narrative and give support to the authenticity of the story.

David had had a few hours to recover from his fright, and now he was able to think clearly and plan accordingly. He showed true leadership as he outlined his plan of getting the information necessary to determine future actions.

5. The new moon. The Jews, like many of their surrounding neighbors, observed a lunar calendar, in which the first day of the month began with the evening on which the crescent of the new moon appeared. The first day of the month, called the “new moon,” was a day of special festivities, including offerings (Num. 28:11–15) and the blowing of trumpets over the offerings and sacrifices (Num. 10:10). Such feasts were both tribal and community affairs at this time, and David, as Saul’s son-in-law, would be expected to be present. The narrative does not name the month of the year. However, inasmuch as there also was such a feast at Bethlehem called a “yearly sacrifice” (1 Sam. 20:6), it is possible that this was an annual feast, most probably that of the new year, which came on the first day of the seventh month, Tishri, in the autumn, as it does in the modern Jewish calendar (see p. 108). Such a gathering had been authorized at the central meeting place for all the tribes (Deut. 12:5–16). In the days of Eli this was Shiloh. Later, in the days of the kingdom, it was Jerusalem. After the removal of the ark from Shiloh, it was quite probable that each district held its own gathering. Thus the same kind of feast could have been held in Bethlehem as was held in Gibeah.

6. For all the family. Better, “for all the clan.” Israel was divided into 12 tribes, but these tribes were again grouped into clans, or families (see Ex. 6:14–30). In the tribes of Benjamin and Judah one clan might meet in Gibeah and another in Bethlehem.

Some have questioned David’s integrity in asking Jonathan to tell Saul of an intended visit home, because they believe that David did not plan to go to Bethlehem at all. A careful examination of the context does not confirm the contention. Bible narratives frequently omit many details that, had they been given, would clarify the picture. The brief account here set forth conveys the impression that the whole incident was a mere fabrication to test Saul’s attitude. But Jonathan’s statement made to his father (vs. 28, 29) strongly implies that the two friends had talked the whole matter over, and that more had been said than is here recorded. It appears evident that David did plan to see his brothers, and that he probably made a brief visit to Bethlehem (see PP 654, 655). But before Saul would be likely to send after him he returned and hid himself in the field awaiting the information from Jonathan as to Saul’s reaction.

8. If there be. David had the consciousness that his plight was not because of any sin on his part. If a load of guilt had been added to the reproach of being treated as a political enemy and the wretchedness of living as a fugitive, the burden would have been almost overwhelming. The knowledge of his innocence sustained David in this trying hour.

A clear conscience can compensate for any loss in this world. Those who are envious of the wicked, who indulge in the pleasures of sin, should remember that these pleasures are paid for by hours of remorse and self-loathing. Many who have drunk at earth’s polluted fountain would give all they had if only they could undo the past and wipe the

foul blot from their lives. On the other hand, those who can face God and their fellow men with a conscience void of offense are the happiest people in the world. They may possess few material advantages but they hold a treasure that all the wealth in this world cannot buy (see 1 Peter 3:13–17).

9. *Evil were determined.* Jonathan felt in his heart that David was wrong in his deductions regarding Saul's attitude. He seemed confident that it was only Saul's deranged mind that at times made him act like a demon. He could have flatly contradicted David, but inasmuch as the experience affected David in a personal way, he willingly deferred to his friend's method of determining Saul's attitude. The future would reveal the truth, and, after all, there could be no harm in following David's method.

There is a valuable lesson in this experience. Men do not have the same heredity and environment, and consequently do not approach the problems of life in the same way. Each believes his own individual method to be the correct one. The result is oftentimes differences of opinion, contradictions, and recriminations. Hot words are hurled back and forth that separate families, friends, and even lovers. Selfishness mounts up and pride maintains the position taken, whether tenable or not. This chapter presents a striking contrast between Saul's and Jonathan's ways of dealing with such situations. Saul, in his impatient tyranny and bigotry, felt that he must be first, and that what he said was correct and final. Anyone disagreeing had to be eliminated, regardless of the means taken to do it. Yet his own son approached life from an entirely different angle. Why the difference between father and son when both had had much the same surroundings and training? Did God illuminate one life and not the other? Was Saul born to be evil, and his son by contrast to possess noble traits of character? Were people required to accept Saul with all his eccentricities, making allowances for all his self-assertiveness and his domineering ways?

The solution to these questions is found in the words of Paul: "to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are" (Rom. 6:16). Because of his free choice, man gives his service, his thoughts, and his outlook on life to either one or the other of two masters—two leaders who represent diametrically opposite standards. Perhaps Saul had served self all during his early youth. Perhaps he had been a problem child in his father's house, a bully among his associates, but still, like Judas, a born leader. If such be true, it is easy to understand his father's anxiety when Saul was away from home hunting for the asses. Yet in Saul's anointing there was abundant proof that God accepted him in spite of his faults and gave him a new heart (ch. 10:6, 9). But Saul refused to walk in the light of heaven. Jonathan, the son of Saul, on the other hand, chose to follow other interests than those of self. Early in life Jonathan, through prayerful surrender to the opening providences of God, had gradually developed the settled policy of his viewpoint. His approach to life led him gladly to accept David's suggestion. This experience along with others may have been in David's mind when he later sang, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133:1).

13. *The Lord be with thee.* Out in the field Jonathan bound himself to David by a solemn oath that he would not desert him, regardless of the turn of events. If the news was good, as he hoped it would be, he would not forsake David. On the other hand, if the news was evil, he would notify him of the truth and pray God's blessing on him as he fled for his life. Jonathan had been personally convinced of God's presence with his father when Saul took over the heavy responsibilities of the kingdom. But since meeting

David he had been divinely impressed that the Lord had planned a high destiny for David also, which destiny would be accomplished, regardless of Saul's malice toward him. In this attitude Jonathan showed true magnanimity.

15. From my house. By birth Jonathan was a member of the house that had sworn enmity to David. Yet he recognized God's purpose to entrust the leadership of Israel to his brother-in-law. Jonathan chose of his own free will to affiliate himself with the house that God had indicated would replace the decadent family into which he had been born. In Jonathan's heart God's plan took precedence over family ties. This was not because of his desire for personal safety, but because he understood that truth must finally triumph.

For ever. Heb. *'ad-'aolam*, literally, "unto an age." The length of the age must be determined by the idea with which it is associated. In this instance the extent of time would be the period of the simultaneous existence of the two houses. For proof that the expression "for ever" does not necessarily mean endlessness, see on Ex. 21:6.

16. Made a covenant. It is difficult to translate the Hebrew of this verse. The rendering of the LXX is, "And if thou doest not, when the Lord cuts off the enemies of David each from the face of the earth, should it happen that the name of Jonathan be discovered by the house of David, then let the Lord seek out the enemies of David."

23. Between thee and me. Jonathan naturally hoped for good news. If it should be otherwise he was confident that the Lord would somehow work out His purposes. He was assured that the same God who had given to him and David such precious hours together would continue to watch over them both.

26. He is not clean. With all his evil traits, Saul was evidently a stickler for form. He understood that any ceremonial uncleanness would be sufficient reason for David's absenting himself from such a special feast (see Lev. 15; 1 Sam. 21:3-5; etc.). His main concern at this moment was not, however, with the form of service, but with the whereabouts of a young man who had dared receive the plaudits of the populace ahead of the king.

27. The second day. If it had been merely a question of uncleanness, David could have washed himself and been clean at eventide and thus been present the second day. When Saul discovered that he was absent he betrayed his real feelings by inquiring of his son concerning "the son of Jesse." His hatred for David was so great that his words were probably far from kindly (see v. 31). Twice David had slipped away from his murderous hand; he was determined he should not do so again.

28. Asked leave. See on v. 6.

30. Rebellious woman. The word "woman" is omitted in the Hebrew, but is clearly called for because the words "perverse" and "rebellious" are feminine in form. Consequently "woman" must be understood. It has been suggested that by leaving out the word "woman," and putting both qualifying words in the feminine gender, Saul was heaping insult upon insult by refusing even to utter the word "woman," or "mother," he being so angry that he allowed himself only the descriptive expletives. One of the worst insults an Oriental can hurl is to heap reproach on someone's mother.

31. Not be established. It was Saul's determination to maintain his dynasty, regardless of any question of right or wrong. In pursuing this course Israel's king was following the example of neighboring kings who held their thrones by force and fought and died to maintain their dynasties. Saul was unwilling to acknowledge God as the supreme ruler of Israel.

34. Grieved for David. The experience was a shocking disillusionment for Jonathan. The open break with his father was most painful to him. His decision to cast his lot with the “son of Jesse” was being tested, but he refused to swerve from the right. Like Moses, who turned his back upon the throne of Egypt, Jonathan chose “rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25). He knew by experience the truth Christ later spoke, “He that loveth father ... more than me is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37).

35. A little lad. By taking the “lad” and the bow and arrows Jonathan disguised the purpose of his journey into the field. He would be suspected merely of going on a hunt or for target practice.

38. Make speed. Compare v. 22. These words were added to impress upon David the extreme gravity of the situation.

41. David exceeded. Literally, “David caused to become great.” The exact meaning of this clause is uncertain. The LXX conveys the idea of weeping a long time or to a great climax. Some have understood the words literally in the sense of David being “made great” or “strengthened” for the ordeal ahead.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–42PP 654, 655

1–3, 5PP 654

6, 7, 25–35, 41, 42PP 655

CHAPTER 21

David at Nob obtaineth of Ahimelech hallowed bread. 7 Doeg was present. 8 David taketh Goliath's sword. 10 David at Gath feigneth himself mad.

1. Nob. This is the first reference in the Scriptures to this site. It is mentioned only six times in the entire OT, four of these occurring in chs. 21 and 22. In none of these is any definite relationship to other well-known sites given. However, in Neh. 11:32, Nob is mentioned immediately after Anathoth, a town about 2 1/2 mi. northeast of the Temple area in Jerusalem. In Isaiah's vision of the Assyrian host approaching Jerusalem from the north, Nob is mentioned as being between Anathoth and Jerusalem (Isa. 10:30–32). But in that vision two other towns are mentioned between Anathoth and Nob. The Assyrian is seen to shake his hand against Mt. Zion when he reaches Nob. The main road to Shechem passes from Jerusalem north over Mt. Scopus, whence the last view of the city is to be had. To the right of this road near the top of Mt. Scopus is a plateau that some think could well be the site of Nob. This position would be not quite halfway from Jerusalem to Anathoth. Others think that Nob was on the Mt. of Olives. It was to Nob that the tabernacle had been removed from Shiloh after the ark had been taken by the Philistines. As yet the ark was still in the house of Abinadab in Kirjath-jearim. David later removed the ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:2, 3). Because the ark was not in the tabernacle at this time, the services were probably conducted in much the same way as in Christ's day when the most holy place of the Temple was empty.

Ahimelech. See on 2 Sam. 8:17.

The priest. Evidently the high priest, in charge of the sanctuary. The presence of the shewbread (see v. 6) shows that the tabernacle was now at Nob (see PP 656).

Was afraid. Literally, “trembled.” Anxiety and fear were on David's face. Ahimelech knew that something was radically wrong. David's whole attitude was so different from what it had been previously that Ahimelech was perplexed to know what move to make.

2. *The king hath commanded.* There is no question about the fact that David gave Ahimelech a complete misrepresentation of the facts. David was in a place of great danger. He had been so overwhelmed by the turn of recent events that it was difficult for him to view present tests in the light of manifest evidences of God's call and protective watchcare. If he fled to Samuel, he might endanger the life of that venerable man. If he returned to his own home in Gibeah, his presence might incur the death of his wife. In the sincerity of his soul he longed to inquire of the Lord, and the only place he could think of was the tabernacle at Nob. Inasmuch as Saul had required the priest to be in attendance upon him in war, it is probable that David, as captain over a thousand (ch. 18:13), had previously stopped at Nob for help before proceeding on his various forays.

His problem now was to make inquiry without giving Ahimelech any real knowledge of the situation. That the priest did inquire for him seems evident from Doeg's tale to Saul (ch. 22:10), and Ahimelech's implied admission of utter ignorance of any trouble between Saul and his son-in-law (ch. 22:14, 15). David found the situation at Nob greatly complicated by Doeg's presence. It seemed as if everything was against him. He needed help, and in the moment of temptation it appeared that the only way to get assistance and at the same time protect the priest was to speak in such a way as to keep Ahimelech from knowing his reason for coming. In this resort to deception David did wrong (see PP 656).

The fact that the Bible here does not condemn David's duplicity must not be taken as a justification of the act. The Scriptures require strict truthfulness.

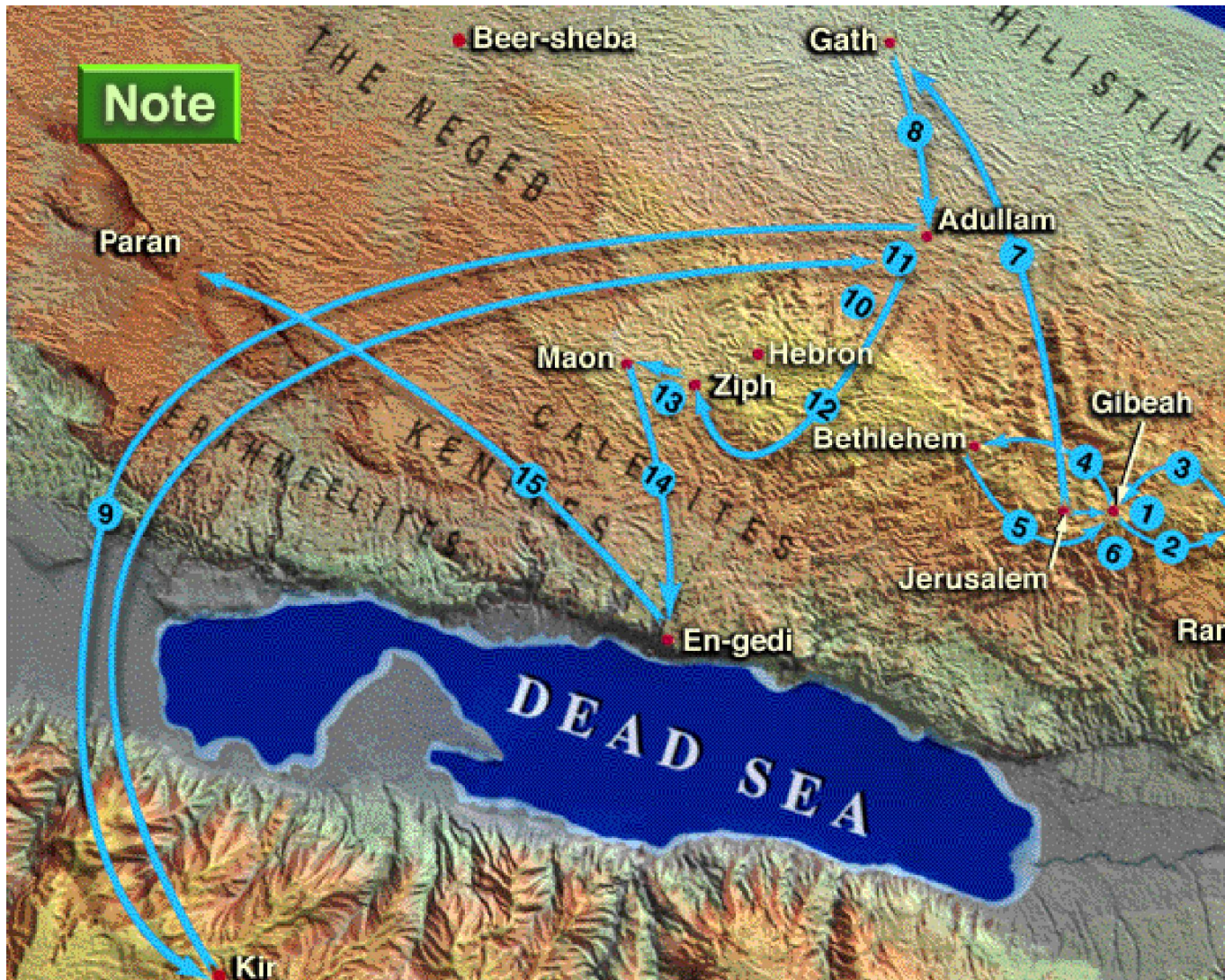
From the standpoint of the standards of the day David's dissimulation would be regarded as reasonably defensible. It is said that among the peoples of the Near East it was—and still is to a great extent—believed that it was not a crime to tell a lie to save a life. The Gibeonites resorted to such stratagem, and yet their lives were spared (Joshua 9:3–18). But though God accepted men tainted with the customs of the day, He was trying to lead them on to a higher standard. He did not reject them or forsake them for the occasional or perhaps habitual practice of the customs of the time. It was God's plan eventually to bring about reform in all these matters.

Although David could not plead ignorance for his act, God did not forsake him. Perhaps it would have been better for him to have gone to Samuel, who was acquainted with the whole matter. God had a thousand ways out of the difficulty. If David had told Ahimelech the truth, the priest would have been forewarned and could have escaped the murderous hand of the king (see PP 656).

I have appointed. Grammatically this sentence could be interpreted as either the words of Saul or those of David. Perhaps David had stationed his men near the eastern road running from Gibeah to Bethlehem to watch for the officers of Saul on their way to Bethlehem to apprehend him. A knowledge of the movements of these emissaries of Saul would be of great value to David.

4. *Hallowed bread.* The 12 cakes of shewbread were replaced every Sabbath by a new baking. According to the Levitical regulations the old bread was to be eaten only by the priests and only in the holy place (Lev. 24:5–9).

David's Wanderings When Fleeing From Saul—1



Beset always by Saul's jealousy, sometimes betrayed by those he aided, David was divinely protected and guided in cave, forest, and desert. Though he made serious blunders, his experience as a leader of a fugitive band gave him practical training for the throne he had been promised but never sought to usurp.

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David's Wanderings When Fleeing From Saul—2

⁵Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Sa 17:15). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

⁶Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Ge 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



From women. As far as our information goes there was nothing in the Mosaic regulations forbidding the eating of the bread by those who were ceremonially clean. Some have observed that it was the custom in ancient nations even for heathen priests to keep themselves from women before performing their official duties, and it is quite likely that the Levites observed this custom also. According to Mosaic law, such intercourse rendered a person ceremonially unclean till evening (Lev. 15:16–18; see also Ex. 19:15). Probably because of the urgency of the king's business, and because David was the son-in-law and apparently the agent of the king, Ahimelech winked at the letter of the law on the basis that David and his men were ceremonially pure.

The shewbread, literally “bread of the Presence,” typified Christ, the living Bread (John 6:28–51). All of man's food, both spiritual and temporal, is received only through the mediation of Christ. Both the manna and the shewbread witnessed the fact that “man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live” (Deut. 8:3). From the viewpoint of physical food, five loaves meant little to David and his men. But if Ahimelech “enquired of the Lord,” as well as

supplying “victuals,” as Doeg testified (1 Sam. 22:10), the visit to the priest was of added value. Perhaps, too, if David thought of the significance of the bread he had secured, it helped him to realize anew the truth that God’s presence would go with him wherever he went. David would need such assurance in the trying years ahead.

6. Hot bread. Some point to this as evidence that David visited the tabernacle on the Sabbath day, but the record merely states that the bread had been taken out when hot bread replaced it.

7. Doeg, an Edomite. Probably one of the hostages or slaves brought back from Saul’s war against Edom (ch. 14:47).

Detained. Doeg had embraced the Hebrew religion and was at the tabernacle paying his vows (PP 656). The circumstances of these vows are not known. Evidently he had committed some trespass which merited the rebuke of Ahimelech, for this action of the priest was one of the primary reasons why Doeg later turned informer against Ahimelech (PP 659).

8. Spear or sword. Seeing Doeg, David realized that he had left Gibeah so hastily that he had not had time to gather any weapons to protect himself in case of attack. As an outlaw he would be at the mercy of anyone who found him.

9. Sword of Goliath. All Goliath’s armor had become David’s own personal property. It is probable that previously he had himself presented the sword to the tabernacle as a thank offering to God. David was well aware that the tabernacle was not an armory, but probably thinking of the possibility of the sword’s still being there, he asked in an offhand manner whether the priest had any weapons he could borrow.

None like that. By the position of the sword in the tabernacle and by the way in which it was wrapped, one would know that it was kept as a memorial of a great victory providentially given to Israel. David appeared happy over the thought of securing this sword, perhaps not so much for its military value as for the constant reminder it would be of the protective guidance of the Lord. He needed such encouragement at this moment.

10. Achish. Achish is called Abimelech in the title of Ps. 34, Achish being a Philistine name, and Abimelech, Semitic. This psalm was written by David when he feigned madness before the men of Philistia. As an outlaw David could not find help in Israel. It was quite a common occurrence for the outlaws of a nation to be given shelter by the enemies of that nation. Gath was not far away, perhaps less than 30 mi. from Nob. Saul would hardly think of looking for him there. David was well acquainted with the country where he had obtained the dowry for his wife Michal. If he should confide in Achish, he was sure Saul would not be permitted to take him.

History reveals many instances in which God’s children have been persecuted by their own people and greatly helped by those who were considered enemies. Zedekiah, for instance, imprisoned Jeremiah for his prophecy (Jer. 32:3), but the Babylonian conquerors showed him mercy (Jer. 40:1–6). David’s experiences exhibited strange contrasts and paradoxes. Why did God permit him to become an exile? What training was there in God’s allowing him one day to be son-in-law to the king, and the next day to beg for bread?

11. King of the land. This conclusion was probably not because the Philistines knew of David’s anointing, but more likely because he was the one who had accepted Goliath’s challenge. This had won him the reputation among enemy and friend alike, of being the hero of the day. He had proved to be Israel’s stoutest defender.

13. Feigned himself mad. A second error for which there is no justification (see ch. 21:2). The results of this experience led David to see the necessity of placing greater dependence upon God. In his new relationship his heart was filled with thanksgiving, and in his praise to God he was inspired to compose the 34th psalm. Some place David's composition of the 56th psalm during his first visit to the king of Gath. It is probably better to assign it to the time of David's second visit, after Saul had so relentlessly pursued him that he almost despaired even of life itself (see ch. 27).

In times of great personal temptation and trial, when enemies are exalted and friends are debased, when no matter which way one moves he is deprived of the counsel and help he needs, it is well to review the narrative of David's escape from Saul, his contact with Ahimelech and Doeg at Nob, and his flight to the enemies of Israel at Gath, and then to read his inspired song of thanksgiving (Ps. 34) thought to have been composed at that time.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-15PP 656, 657

CHAPTER 22

1 *Companies resort unto David at Adullam.* 3 *At Mizpeh he commendeth his parents unto the king of Moab.* 5 *Admonished by Gad, he cometh to Hareth.* 6 *Saul going to pursue him, complaineth of his servants' unfaithfulness.* 9 *Doeg accuseth Ahimelech.* 11 *Saul commandeth to kill the priests.* 17 *The footmen refusing, Doeg executeth it.* 20 *Abiathar escaping, bringeth David the news.*

1. Cave Adullam. According to Josephus (*Antiquities* vi. 12. 3), a cave near the city of Adullam. Adullam has been identified with *Khirbet esh-Sheikh Madhkûr*, 16 1/4 mi. (26 km.) southwest of Jerusalem on the western slope as the mountains fall off toward the Shephelah. The town is at the eastern end of the Valley of Elah, where David met the Philistine giant. Many caves are found in these hills, some of which are very large. The sandstone formation is so soft that the walls can be cut down with shells. Even centuries have not erased the marks of these shells. In some of these caverns the shepherds kept their flocks. In some, a few miles south of Adullam, the early Christians are reported to have lived at the time persecution drove them out of the cities of Palestine. Some of the caves contain burial vaults and crypts similar to those in the catacombs at Rome. Adullam was the hiding place of David when he longed for a drink from the well at Bethlehem. Three of his valiant men risked their lives to thread through the lines of the Philistines, who had raided the Valley of Rephaim near Jerusalem, and to bring their beloved leader a drink. So overcome was David by their loyalty that he poured out the water as a libation before the Lord (2 Sam. 23:13-17; 1 Chron. 11:15-19). This incident occurred in the time of harvest (2 Sam. 23:13; cf. 1 Sam. 23:1), the spring and early summer of the year. David had probably spent the winter in this cave.

While in the cave of Adullam David wrote the 57th psalm, according to its heading. Recovering his faith and courage, he now expressed his confidence in God's deliverance, even though he found himself "among lions: and even among ... men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword" (Ps. 57:4). His changed attitude may in part be accounted for by the presence of the prophet Gad, who, as some have suggested, joined David and his companions at the cave (see on v. 5).

3. Mizpeh. Literally, "watchtower." All over the mountainous district of Moab the ruins of these "holds" or fortresses have been found. They were built on the shoulders of

mountain peaks within sight of one another. Observers were stationed in these fortresses to form a chain of communications. The exact site of this Mizpah in Moab is not known. It was probably one of the fortresses in the Moabite hills not far from Kir. Kir appears, later at least, to have been the capital of Moab (see 2 Kings 3:25–27). Its modern name is *Kerak*, a town situated on the slopes of the *Wadi Kerak*, on an eminence well suited for defense. About 14 mi. (22.4 km.) from Kir is the *Wadi Hesā*—the Biblical brook Zered—which constituted the northern boundary of Edom. Saul had warred against Moab after coming to the throne (1 Sam. 14:47). Therefore anyone outlawed by Saul would find refuge in that country. Also, David may have been influenced by the fact that Ruth, his great-grandmother was a Moabitess.

4. Hold. Heb. *mešudah*, “a fastness,” “a stronghold,” from the root *šud*, meaning “to hunt.”

5. Gad. This is the first mention of a man who was to figure so prominently in David’s life. Inasmuch as Saul turned against not only the priests but also the prophets, of whom Samuel was chief, it would be expected that the minds of all the truly religious would be alienated from their king. Perhaps it was Samuel who dispatched Gad to connect himself with David. The future king of Israel would be greatly benefited by the presence of a divinely inspired seer. As long as David lived, Gad was his seer (2 Sam. 24:11–19). Gad, along with Nathan the prophet, was the compiler of David’s biography (1 Chron. 29:29). Since he survived his lifelong friend and king, the indications are that he came to David while yet a young man. Although it is not stated, it is probable that Gad came to David while David was at Adullam, and that he accompanied David to Moab, rather than traveling to Mizpah to find him. Only by attempting to piece together the snatches of information concerning David from various portions of Scripture can it be seen how many details—interesting if we could only recover them—have been omitted in setting forth the story of God’s providential assistance to His children.

What God did for David in providing prophetic guidance He had done for Saul. These two lives are placed in contrast and demonstrate that God is no respecter of persons. Those who fall short of the divine standard fail, not because the Lord does not do everything that Heaven can devise to make true success possible, but because Heaven’s plan is persistently rejected.

Abide not. David was not to remain in Moab. He was needed in Judah. The forces of Saul seemed impotent against the continuing Philistine raids (1 Sam. 23:1, 27; 1 Chron. 11:15), and conditions were unstable. The story of Nabal implies that armed protection was needed by shepherds (1 Sam. 25:15, 16, 21). Saul’s hatred of David was no reason for David to run away to a foreign land. God, who had protected him so many times in the past, would not now forsake him, but would shape events in such a way through hardship and suffering that he would receive the training necessary for future leadership.

The discipline of suffering was operative even in the life of Jesus. The Captain of our salvation was made “perfect through sufferings” (Heb. 2:10). David, by returning to the midst of all the controversial elements in Judah, was so to conduct himself as to bring courage to all those about him. God today is anxious to demonstrate the loyalty of His children, in every type of environment. He does not want His children to retreat when circumstances become difficult. He desires His followers to demonstrate the beauty of the Christian religion and reveal its vast superiority over the service of self and Satan.

Hareth. Identified by some with the modern *Kharâs*, northwest of Hebron, on the edge of the mountain district; but the identification is uncertain.

6. David was discovered. Some commentators take the narrative of the remainder of this chapter as an illustration of the way in which the Hebrew text sometimes departs from the strict chronological sequence of events in order to carry one thought to its conclusion before discussing another. Such an interpretation of this passage assumes that Doeg's accusation against Ahimelech the priest and the massacre of Nob followed immediately upon the discovery of David's original escape, but that the narrative continues with the account of David and his men until it becomes necessary to introduce the massacre to explain the arrival of Abiathar at Keilah in the next chapter. This interpretation is based largely on Ahimelech's avowal of his ignorance of David's true situation. This is not an illogical deduction.

It is equally reasonable to take the narrative as running consecutively. In this case the statement that David and his men were discovered means that it became known that they had emerged from their hiding place in the stronghold of Adullam and were encamped in the Forest of Hareth; and that when the king learned of this he complained to his officers about treasonable collaboration with the outlaw (v. 8). Thereupon Doeg the herdsman would seize the opportunity to turn informer against Ahimelech (vs. 10>9, 10). There is no reason to suppose that a man in Doeg's station would have known, when he saw David at the sanctuary, anything of the real reason for his coming. Since there would have been nothing unusual in David's stopping there for counsel before going on an errand for Saul, Doeg would doubtless have considered this not worth reporting at the time. Ahimelech's reply does not help in determining the sequence of events, for his plea of ignorance at the time of David's visit would still be his logical defense (see on vs. 14, 15), regardless of the interval between his alleged treason and the arraignment of the priests before Saul. Thus the slaying of the priests and the massacre at Nob did not necessarily immediately follow David's visit to the sanctuary (see PP 658, 659).

A tree in Ramah. Since Ramah and Gibeah are distinct sites separated by a considerable distance (see on ch. 1:1), Saul could hardly be in Gibeah, yet sitting under a tree in the town of Ramah. The Hebrew word *ramah* should here probably be translated "height," or "high place" as in Eze. 16:24, 25. The high place in Gibeah was probably a favorite meeting place for the men of the city.

8. Conspired against me. Because of his insane jealousy Saul began to pity himself and blame everyone but himself for all his frustrated attempts to capture David. He now resorted to heaping shame upon his own tribesmen for withholding information from him in order to aid a rival from Judah. Even his own son had, so he thought, turned against him, and was guilty of treason. He had threatened to have him put to death once before (ch. 14:44); now he felt that the people's sympathies were with Jonathan even more than before.

9. Then answered Doeg. Doeg, the chief herdsman, saw his chance to be avenged on the priest Ahimelech (see on ch. 21:7), as well as to enhance his position with the king. He virtually told Saul that Jonathan and the Benjamites were not so much in the wrong as the priest, who not only gave David food but inquired of the Lord for him, and gave him a weapon (v. 10). Doeg apparently did not volunteer this information until bribed by offers of rich rewards and high position (see PP 659).

14. Ahimelech answered. Ahimelech did not deny the charge of aiding David, but he denied any disloyalty. On his reply hinges a difference of opinion as to the time placement of this incident (see on v. 6). Those who hold that the incident occurred immediately after David's flight from Gibeah interpret Ahimelech's words as meaning that he had not learned, up to that moment, that David was no longer Saul's most faithful servant and an honored member of the king's household. He could hardly have been either so ignorant or so foolish as to tell Saul, after David had been a fugitive and an outlaw for many months, that he "goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house."

This conclusion is based on our English translation, which renders the verbs in the present tense. Actually the Hebrew has only one verb, *sur*, here translated "goeth." The word "is," though it occurs three times in this verse, is supplied. The form of the verb *sur* here found may be given either a present or a past sense, so that the sentence is quite indefinite as to the time period under consideration. The tense must be supplied by the context. The literal rendering of the words of Ahimelech is: "And who among all thy servants so faithful as David, who, the king's son-in-law, and turning [or turned] at thy bidding, and honorable in thine house?" The past tense seems to be demanded by the context. The insertion of the necessary verb forms in rendering such a sentence into English must depend on the best judgment of the translators, but in the nature of the case it will allow differences of opinion. Ahimelech obviously meant to say that he had aided one whom he had supposed *at the time*—whether recent or remote—to be an honored representative of the king.

15. Did I then? Literally, "today my beginning to enquire of God for him?" Nearer to the original than either the KJV or the RSV is the rendering of the RV and ASV: "Have I to-day begun to inquire of God for him?" The implication is that if he had begun now, after knowing David's status, to seek divine guidance for David, that would be giving aid to a recognized enemy of Saul, but that what he had done before he learned of the controversy between Saul and David should have no bearing on the question of his loyalty. With quiet dignity Ahimelech answered Saul's charge that he had used the Urim and the Thummin in a way contrary to Saul's ideas by stating that he had inquired for the one closest to Saul, one who had ever been loyal and devoted, and he had rendered his service to the messenger *for the king*. His last word was a denial that he had known anything of the situation.

17. The footmen. Heb. *rašim*, literally, "the runners," sometimes used of the royal bodyguard as obviously here. Samuel probably referred to this office when he warned Israel that the king they were asking for would take their sons, and conscript some of them to "run before his chariots" (ch. 8:11). Saul was frustrated by the refusal of the guards to lift their hand against the Lord's priests. It was a shocking deed that the king required. Even among heathen tribes today the medicine man is held sacred, and none dare raise a hand against him. How much more should Saul have had respect for the servant of the Most High!

18. Doeg the Edomite. This descendant of Esau appears as a man after Saul's own heart—jealous, resentful, malevolent, and anxiously waiting for any flimsy excuse to carry out the intents of his evil nature. Now that he had permission from the king of Israel, Doeg did not hesitate to lift his hand against the servant of God, even disregarding the sacred vestments of Ahimelech as well as those of his associates. Eighty-five men fell

that day before the lust of selfish greed. What a contrast here between Saul's professed religious fervor that kept Agag alive (ch. 15:20) and his frenzy that enabled him to perpetrate an act unparalleled in Jewish history for its barbarity.

19. Both men and women. The innocent suffered with the supposedly guilty. The inhabitants of Nob probably had had nothing to do with the removal of the tabernacle and the priestly families to Nob (see on ch. 21:1), yet Saul's senseless and satanic fury wiped out the entire town. Once before, the Philistines had destroyed the sacred city of Shiloh. They were Israel's enemies, yet we have no record of their annihilating the entire population.

20. Abiathar. The only recorded survivor from Nob. Fleeing "after" David, he probably did not reach him until the later had left the Forest of Hareth for the city of Keilah (see on ch. 32:2, 6).

21. Shewed David. Literally, he "caused David to know." Obviously David had not heard the news before. Therefore this verse indicates that the atrocity had happened immediately preceding Abiathar's arrival at Keilah rather than some time earlier in connection with David's visit to Nob.

23. Abide thou with me. What a joy it must have been for David to welcome Abiathar to his company. What encouragement it must have been to see the Urim and the Thummim (ch. 23:6) and to know that in spite of the devastation of Nob, the hand of God had been over the ephod and the priest who guarded it. Yet when David learned the awful facts of the tragedy, he was filled with remorse as he realized that he had been responsible for the death of the high priest and those who had perished with him. He now wished that he had refused to stoop to duplicity. Gladly would he have done differently could he have had the year to live over again. But the past could not be undone. Dreadful as was his self-reproach there was nothing to do but to reach "forth unto those things which are before" (Phil. 3:13).

It was after hearing of Doeg's deed that David wrote the 52d psalm (see heading). He stood amazed that any man could set himself up in arrogant antagonism to God's plan instead of resting upon the Lord's eternal mercy. By a tongue sharp as a razor Doeg had sown deceit and calamity to such an extent that he became the very personification of fraud and evil. But the day was coming when he would reap that which he had sown.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-23PP 657-660

1 PP 657; 4T 525

2 Ed 152

2-5PP 658

7-10, 16, 18, 19PP 659

20-23PP 660

CHAPTER 23

1 *David, enquiring of the Lord by Abiathar, rescueth Keilah. 7 God shewing him the coming of Saul, and the treachery of the Keilites, he escapeth from Keilah. 14 In Ziph Jonathan cometh and comforteth him. 19 The Ziphites discover him to Saul. 25 At Maon he is rescued from Saul by the invasion of the Philistines. 29 He dwelleth at En-gedi.*

1. Keilah. A town about 2 1/2 mi. (4 km.) south of Adullam, perched on the rocky sides of the *Wadi es-Sur* as it emerges from the mountain district into the plain of Elah.

Keilah was about 9 mi. (14.4 km.) from the city of Hebron. It is now known as *Khibet Qilā*.

Threshingfloors. The season was well toward early summer, for the grain had been harvested and threshed and the golden heaps were piled on the threshing floors awaiting distribution. Much of this kind of work was a community project. Three factors were taken into consideration in the selection of these floors: (1) the need for a flat surface, preferably rock; (2) the necessity of a place high enough to permit a good breeze to blow away the chaff; and (3) the convenience of a location as central in the community as possible (see 1 Chron. 21:18–26).

2. David enquired. This is considered by some as evidence that Abiathar was now with David and that inquiry was made by the Urim and the Thummim (see on v. 9), although the text does not mention the manner of inquiry. But v. 6 seems to imply that Abiathar did not reach David until he was at Keilah. Prior to this, however, Gad the seer was with David (ch. 22:5). A seer was the one through whom men normally inquired of God at that time (ch. 9:9). So it could easily have been through Gad that David sought guidance from God.

3. Afraid here in Judah. Should David's men as much as show themselves at this time, they would be in danger of immediate detection. As soon as Saul would discover their hiding place he would send a force against them. Fearful for their lives among their own tribe, they hesitated to face a strong foreign enemy. They would be glad to help protect Israel against the unprovoked attacks of their enemies, but how much good could so-called outlaws do in towns that were supposed to be loyal to the crown, and that would be expected to aid the king in apprehending opposition forces? Despite Saul's weaknesses, the majority of the people were obedient to the crown. David and his counselors were in a real dilemma, and they felt the only wise course was to present their problem before the Lord.

4. Go down. God is happy to have His children consult His will. The more consistently they do this, the more confidence they will have in His way out of difficulty. God was strengthening Israel to put down the depredations of the Philistines. If David should take an active stand in this matter, he could win the favor of the people, who would know that his policies were to strengthen the kingdom and not to foment a revolution against it.

5. Went to Keilah. The consent of the men to follow the divine direction indicates that during the months of association, David had convinced those who were with him of their need first to determine the will of God, and then to go forward fearlessly, trusting in the opening providences. The same careful inquiry into the will of God concerning every act and attitude should mark the course of Christians today.

Keilah was a walled town (v. 7), but the unprepared inhabitants had no chance against the experienced soldiers of Philistia. Saul was many miles away, but David and his men were removed only a short distance. Action was immediate, and the surprised Philistines were routed.

Brought away their cattle. Either the defeated Philistines were driven so far into their own territory that David could collect reparations for the damage done, or the cattle were the oxen the Philistines had brought to cart away the grain. How much of the booty David gave to Keilah, and how much he kept for his own men, we are not told. Several hundred men would need a large store of provisions.

6. *Abiathar.* The supervisor from Nob seems to have reached David at Keilah with news of the massacre (ch. 22:20, 21). Although some have understood “to Keilah” to go with the following verb “came down,” the phrase is generally regarded as meaning that Abiathar first met David at Keilah.

7. *Shut in.* David evidently stayed long enough in Keilah to make Saul feel that he was trapped at last.

8. *To besiege David.* In his efforts against David, Saul was probably convinced that God was leading him. A man can think evil so long that it becomes good in his eyes, and he can be conscientious in carrying out the thoughts and intents of his heart. For example, Korah felt convinced that God had appointed him to lead in the rebellion against Moses; Miriam was confident of right when she criticized the wife of Moses; and Jehoiakim, apparently without any qualms, refused to accept Jeremiah’s prophecy of Israel’s Babylonian captivity and burned the prophetic scroll (Jer. 36:22–30).

David, on the contrary, had in his heart the desire to maintain the justice and dignity of his people before neighboring tribes, as well as to assist any in Israel who might be suffering hardship. He was not revolting against Saul by ingratiating himself with members of his own tribe. Neither was he fighting, as the Philistines were doing, for the booty obtainable by raiding towns in nearby districts.

9. *The ephod.* By his own malicious act against the priests Saul had deprived himself of the benefits of the Urim and the Thummim, if indeed the Lord had communicated with him in this manner since his rejection (see ch. 28:6). No longer receiving divine communications, he quieted his accusing conscience by seeing, in every opening, a revelation of God to himself that was in harmony with the cravings of his diseased mind. By divine providence, and doubtless because of David’s consecration to do God’s will at all costs, the ephod, lost by Saul, found its way to David.

The Scriptures do not disclose the exact way in which the Urim and the Thummim gave the answers to inquiry. This silence has caused much speculation among the rabbis. The Babylonian Talmud states that the oracle was called Urim because it gave explanatory light to its utterances; it was called Thummim because its declarations were always complete. The tradition took these stones to be the ones on which the names of the 12 tribes were inscribed, and taught that the letters needed to spell out the reply were raised like the letters on a coin. The letters composing the names of the 12 tribes did not make up the letters of the entire Hebrew alphabet, but tradition added to these the names “Abraham,” “Isaac,” “Jacob,” and “Tribes of Jeshurun” (*Treatise Yoma* 73, a, b).

Josephus said: “God declared beforehand, by those twelve stones which the high priest bare on his breast, and which were inserted into his breastplate, when they should be victorious in battle; for so great a splendor shone forth from them before the army began to march, that all the people were sensible of God’s being present for their assistance” (*Antiquities* iii. 8. 9). However the Urim and the Thummim were not the 12 stones of the breastplate but 2 stones of great brilliance, one on each side of the breastplate. Approval was indicated by a light encircling the stone at the right and disapproval by a shadow on the stone at the left (see PP 351). The answers ascribed to the Urim and the Thummim were not always the equivalent of Yes or No (see Judges 1:2; 20:18; 1 Sam. 23:11, 12), but it is possible that the priest gave an answer in sentence form, in answer to a series of questions.

10. Destroy the city. There is no doubt that the inhabitants of Keilah were most grateful for David's help, and for the moment probably gave no thought to any future involvements. Instead of remaining in the forest at Hareth, David found the city opened to him and his men, and the people doubtless did all they could to provide for the needs of such a large company. But news travels fast, and it was not long before Saul was notified of the details of the encounter with the Philistines, and the complexion of the situation changed overnight. The men of Keilah realized they would be forced to decide, on the one hand, between loyalty to Saul, with the retention of their status in Israel, and on the other hand, the implied rejection of Saul through their befriending of the outlawed David, with the consequent destruction of their city.

David revealed foresight in anticipating such a situation, but even with his long experience, he knew not which way to move. He had come to Hareth under divine guidance at precisely the time his presence was needed to save Keilah. Yet he knew if he remained within the walls, he would be fighting against the Lord's anointed and initiating a civil revolution, which his very soul rebelled against.

12. They will deliver. God did not instruct David to leave Keilah as He had instructed him to fight a short time before. David was left to use his own judgment after knowing what would take place. He showed his good generalship in not thinking so much of his own safety as of that of the entire community.

God had provided the same divine guidance for Saul earlier in his career. Saul refused to act on God's counsel; David profited by it and went on from victory to victory. David quietly withdrew from Keilah, his men following him unhesitatingly. Day by day each new experience encouraged his own heart and inspired the confidence of his men in their beloved leader.

14. Ziph. A town on a plateau 3 3/4 mi. (6 km.) southeast of Hebron. Hebron is situated west of two mountains of 3,000 ft. (915 m.) elevation. A deep wadi lies between these two hills. On the slope of the eastern hill toward the Dead Sea begins the Wilderness of Ziph, which extends eastward for several miles. This district is a barren, sun-scorched desert, full of deep wadies that make excellent hiding places. The "strong holds," or fortresses, were lookouts commanding large areas of country, and placed near enough together so that it was impossible for anyone to traverse this section without being noticed. Probably David placed his men at various strategic positions, and every day word reached him of the location of Saul's forces. Water and food were almost unobtainable.

15. A wood. Heb. *chorshah*, which probably should be rendered as a place name, "Horesh." Some have located this site 1 3/4 mi. (2.8 km.) due south of the town of Ziph, on the main traveled road from Hebron to En-gedi. Perhaps David went here in search of food or drink.

16. Went to David. Jonathan found some means of arranging a meeting with David. Perhaps some of the soldiers sent out on these searching parties gave Jonathan information that was kept from Saul. If so, David would be convinced of sympathy on the part of many.

He needed the encouragement that such a visit could give. Although the title of the 11th psalm does not give the time of its composition, its tone of confidence has caused some to feel that after Jonathan's visit, David expressed his trust in the providential openings of the Lord in its lines (see Ps. 11; PP 660, 661).

19. The Ziphites. The Hebrew does not here use the definite article; hence the phrase might be better translated “some Ziphites.” This suggests that not all the Ziphites sought to betray David. When David heard that he had been betrayed, he composed the 54th psalm.

Hill of Hachilah. The exact location of this hill is not known. Some have identified it with a long ridge of chalky limestone, running from the Wilderness of Ziph toward the Dead Sea.

Jeshimon. Literally, “wilderness” (see Deut. 32:10; Ps. 68:7), or “desert” (see Ps. 78:40; 106:14; Isa. 43:19, 20). Whether “Jeshimon” should here appear as a proper name is questionable.

24. Maon. A town about 8 mi. (12.8 km.) south of Ziph. The Wilderness of Maon is east of the town extending toward the Dead Sea. The site is now known as *Tell Maʿīn*.

28. Sela-hammahlekoth. Literally, “the cliff of divisions.” According to Conder: “Between the ridge of El Kôlah (the ancient hill of Hachilah) and the neighbourhood of Maon there is a great gorge called ‘the Valley of Rocks,’ a narrow but deep chasm, impassable except by a detour of many miles, so that Saul might have stood within sight of David, yet quite unable to overtake his enemy; and to this ‘cliff of division’ the name Malâky now applies, a word closely approaching the Hebrew *Mahlekoth*. The neighbourhood is seamed with many torrent beds, but there is no other place near Maon where cliffs such as are to be inferred from the word *selaʿ* can be found. It seems to me pretty safe, therefore, to look on this gorge as the scene of the wonderful escape of David, due to a sudden Philistine invasion, which terminated the history of his hair-breadth escapes in the south country” (*Tent Work*, vol. 2, p. 91).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–29PP 660, 661

5, 14, 16–18PP 660

19, 20, 24, 25 PP 661

CHAPTER 24

1 *David in a cave at En-gedi, having cut off Saul’s skirt, spareth his life. 8 He sheweth thereby his innocency. 16 Saul, acknowledging his fault, taketh an oath of David, and departeth.*

1. Wilderness of En-gedi. This chapter should have begun with v. 29 of the preceding chapter as it does in the current Hebrew text. En-gedi is a beautiful oasis on the shore of the Dead Sea, at the mouth of the *Wadi el-Kelb*—a steep, tortuous canyon beginning back some 8 mi. (12.8 km.) in the white limestone wilderness of En-gedi at an elevation of about 1,200 ft. (368 m.) above sea level. In that small distance the bed of the wadi drops some 2,500 ft. (762 m.) till it reaches the level of the Dead Sea 1,305 ft. (398 m.) below sea level. The precipitous cliffs of the wilderness, about 2,000 ft. (610 m.) high, approach to within 1 1/2 mi. (2.4 km.) of the sea, so that they form a formidable palisade to the west of the town. Up in the wadi several hundred feet above the base of a cliff, the beautiful warm spring of En-gedi gushes out from beneath a large boulder at a reported temperature of 83° F. In the sides of the wadi are many caves, both natural and artificial. The site is known in modern times as *ʿAin Jidi*.

2. *Rocks of the wild goats.* Portions of the wilderness west of the oasis are so badly eroded as to be almost hopelessly impassable. But there is a road from Carmel in Judah that crosses the Wilderness of Maon and En-gedi and descends through the *Wadi el-Kelb* to this oasis. Saul probably took this road in his determined search for David.

3. *Sheepcotes.* All over Palestine the shepherds use the natural caves as places where the sheep may be protected from bad weather. Usually in connection with such caves are circular enclosures built of stone and briers, called “cotes,” which in good weather offer protection to the sheep from both man and beast.

Cover his feet. A euphemism for having a bowel movement (see Judges 3:24, margin). Coming from the outside, Saul could see nothing, but the men in the cave could see clearly, for their eyes were accustomed to the darkness.

4. *Skirt of Saul’s robe.* Literally, “the wing of Saul’s outer garment.” This robe was probably the exterior tunic without sleeves, wide, and reaching to the ankles, worn by women, and also by men of high rank, such as kings and priests, etc. Doubtless David’s men recognized the king as much by his dress as by his personal appearance. Although no record is given of a divine promise that David would have his enemy delivered into his hand, what the men said may, indeed, have been true. The opportunity probably came as a test to David to enable him to exhibit the characteristics he had developed. Had David at this juncture killed Saul, he would have shown that in one respect, at least, he was no better than Saul, who if the circumstances had been reversed, would have delighted to kill David.

Satan challenged Job’s goodness, contending that Job would curse God if certain blessings were removed and certain restrictions were placed upon him. To meet such a charge God permitted Satan to afflict Job to prove the falsity of the adversary’s statement, as well as the uprightness of His servant. Like Job, David stood the test. David was so close to God that, with his enemy in his hand, he not only refused to harm him personally but restrained his men from committing any untoward act in his name.

5. *David’s heart.* That is, his conscience accused him. The ancients used the word “heart” to describe the seat of the intellect (Prov. 15:28; 16:9, 23; 23:7, 12; Matt. 12:34; Luke 6:45). The word “conscience” does not occur in the OT. The NT word comes from the verb “to know,” and, therefore, emphasizes a faculty of the intellect rather than that of the feelings. Men say they are governed by their conscience when in reality they are often controlled by their feelings. Conscience is a safe guide only if illuminated by the light from above. Saul’s conscience was darkened, even seared with the hot iron of jealousy and envy (see 1 Tim. 4:2). David’s conscience had been under divine training, and, like Paul’s, was to a large degree void of offense (Acts 24:16). Having been given the divine unction of spiritual discernment, he had proved himself a true leader. He was not dependent on the customs and traditions of his day, but possessed a knowledge of that which was divinely and intrinsically correct.

7. *Stayed his servants.* Perhaps his men, like the disciples later, were looking forward to the positions of honor they would occupy when the kingdom of David was established. They had reached the place where they were not satisfied with the meager fare and the days and nights of vigilant watching and running away. Now that Saul was in their hand they exultingly thought the cause was won, and were impatient to end their long vigil. David corrected them by apologizing for even the slight liberty he had taken in spoiling

the king's garment. He probably informed them, as he later told the king, that the only way to true success is to await God's hour.

Abraham awaited God's suggestion, and was able to deliver Lot, a man who plunged ahead in his own wisdom. Moses refused the honors of Egypt, yet after 40 years of testing became the prophet of the Most High. How else can man, going into the laboratory of life to apprentice himself to Christ (see DA 297), work the works of God?

8. *Stooped with his face.* His keen spiritual perception and deep love of righteousness prevented David from hating Saul, criticizing him to others, and attacking him at the first opportunity. David had no need of sensing a so-called righteous indignation at the treatment he had received. So far as Saul's attitude toward him was concerned, he could leave that with God, who doeth all things well. There was a calm confidence in his soul that God was with him, and in his heart there was pity for his king. No one would have been happier than David had Saul crucified his selfishness and humbled his heart before God. In the sincerity of his soul David probably yearned to have Saul experience the same fellowship with God that he had. His obeisance, therefore, was not a formality. He bowed with a heart full of reverence for the office of king and a yearning for the man in that office.

Christ had accepted Judas as one of the twelve. He had sent him out on missions of mercy and intercession. He had seen him gradually change over into the critical, opinionated, egotistical opponent of His whole program. Yet Christ loved him and would have been happy to make him one of the leaders of His church (see DA 294, 295, 717). At last He bowed before Judas with all the yearning of His soul, and in washing his feet, mutely appealed to him to give his heart to the One who came not to be ministered unto but to minister. Paul stood before Agrippa, making a defense of his new way of life. He also had had many evidences of providential care to which he personally might cling. The rulers had done him many injustices. He was not thinking of these. His heart was full of longing for the king, who finally exclaimed, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).

9. *Men's words.* Notice how kindly and tenderly David addressed the king. Instead of blaming Saul for all the king's actions, David looked back to the influence of false tongues, dripping with the malice of self-interest, which urged the king on and used him to their own advantage. That Saul was affected by such tongues may be inferred from ch. 22:7. Like Saul, many a leader has about him a company of men who are with him because of the loaves and fishes. The safety of their position depends on the patronage they can give the leader in power. If a change of administration should come, they would be without support. The henchmen of Saul had cast aside the mounting evidence of God's protecting care over David. They had paid no attention to Jonathan's estimate of the "son of Jesse." Though many were convinced of the errors of Saul's acts, yet for personal reasons they patronized him and blackened David's name (see Ps. 55:3; Ps. 56:5, 6; Ps. 57:4; etc.). The fact that David was of another tribe may have had something to do with the evil reports that were spread around.

10. *Kill thee.* Superficial readers of the Scriptures think there is such a contrast between the eye-for-an-eye philosophy of certain OT passages and the philosophy of love advanced in the writings of the NT. But here, centuries before NT times, David's actions illustrate the same spirit taught by Christ in His beatitudes (Matt. 5:11). David's men

were willing to love their friends, but they still cherished hatred for their enemies. In the midst of such attitudes David revealed respect for his worst enemy (see Matt. 5:43–48).

11. *See the skirt.* Saul would probably have paid little attention to the words of David about lifting his hand against the Lord’s anointed, but when he saw the edge of his robe held up before his eyes, and realized how close he had come to death, he trembled before the material evidence of David’s innocence. It was the triumph of spiritual force over physical prowess.

12. *The Lord judge.* The king could talk only in terms of physical achievement, and when David referred the whole matter to the One who had anointed Saul, the king knew he had to plead guilty. Saul’s response was voluntary, as was that of Judas when he returned the bribe he had so greatly coveted (Matt. 27:3–5). So it will be in the judgment day. When Christ’s innocence and eternal sacrifice are evidenced before the assembled hosts of all ages, every knee will bow and every tongue will acclaim the perfection of His character (Phil. 2:10, 11).

13. *Proverb of the ancients.* David did not add the converse, “goodness proceedeth from the righteous,” but Saul could and probably did draw his own conclusions. Had David been plotting to harm Saul, he would not have lost such an opportunity as had been his a few moments before. It is natural for men’s acts to reflect their feelings, so from a really wicked heart evil actions come forth. In offering this as additional proof of his innocence, David was urging the king to realize that every man is responsible to God for his acts. He was assuring him that, regardless of the depth to which he had fallen, God was able and willing to transform his evil nature. All that was needed was Saul’s choice and cooperation.

14. *After a flea.* Literally, “after one flea.” The statement is a striking manifestation of David’s humility. Compare the attitude of the woman of Tyre when asking for Christ’s help for her daughter (Mark. 7:24–30).

17. *More righteous than I.* Compare David’s respect for Saul both as a father-in-law and as a king, and his reverence for Saul as the Lord’s anointed, with Saul’s impetuous selfishness in bargaining by means of Michal to have David slain, his jealous hatred that turned him into a demon, and his unsatisfied thirst for the blood of the man who had spared his life. There was forced from Saul’s unwilling lips the confession of the truth, as the warmth of David’s magnanimity melted the icy hatred.

19. *The Lord reward thee.* What a manifest change in tone from the criticism Saul hurled at his own tribesmen because he could get no reports from them as to David’s whereabouts (ch. 22:8)! Then the king was harsh and exacting, but now his voice was manifestly tender. His emotion was so great that he wept. He could scarcely believe he had been saved by so narrow a margin. Once so boastful, now so humble! So will the wicked be before the judgment seat of the Most High (see GC 668, 669.)

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–22PP 661–663

1–6PP 661

4–6 MH484

11 PP 736

8–11, 16–22PP 662

CHAPTER 25

1 Samuel dieth. 2 David in Paran sendeth to Nabal. 10 Provoked by Nabal's churlishness, he mindeth to destroy him. 14 Abigail understanding thereof, 18 taketh a present, 23 and by her wisdom 32 pacifieth David. 36 Nabal hearing thereof dieth. 39 David taketh Abigail and Ahinoam to be his wives. 44 Michal is given to Phalti.

1. Samuel died. On the relation between the ages of Samuel, Saul, and David, see p. 132.

Samuel made a notable contribution when he organized schools for the youth, so that Israel could be trained in the great principles of salvation. God's original plan was that the Levites should be scattered throughout the whole land, teaching the people concerning the things of God. But being largely unemployed, the members of this tribe were forced to find a livelihood in other kinds of work, with the result that the people were fast becoming little better than the heathen about them. As a result the schools of the prophets were instituted.

In his house. The word "house" need not be understood as referring to Samuel's residence, but is here probably used of a burial chamber. If Samuel had been buried literally "in his house," there would be perpetual defilement (Num. 19:11–22). The traditional burial place of Samuel is a cave over which has been built a Moslem mosque in *Nebī Samwīl*, a town about 5 mi. northwest of Jerusalem, but the identification is not certain.

Wilderness of Paran. A desert extending from southern Judah south toward Sinai (see Num. 10:12). Paran is in one instance equated with Seir (Deut. 33:2), and Seir was the home of Esau in the Negeb below Hebron (see Gen. 32:3 etc.). The Wilderness of Paran is thought to include the Wilderness of Zin lying between Kadeshbarnea and the great Arabah or plain between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqabah. Since the tribes inhabiting this region were predatory in nature, David would find a very cold reception as he fled to Paran, and doubtless recognized his mistake. This reception, together with the knowledge that Saul's enmity would be more bitter after the death of Samuel, made David sense the need of definite help from on high. In his great anxiety he composed the 120th and 121st psalms (see PP 664).

2. Carmel. A town a little more than a mile north of Maon, on the crest of the mountains. All the water east of this place flows into the Dead Sea; all the water west flows into the Mediterranean. The Wilderness of Maon, a sparsely settled district full of dry wadies, lies to the east and south of Carmel. During their stay in the wilderness of Ziph and Maon (ch. 23:24–26), before the removal to En-gedi (ch. 23:29), David and his men had become acquainted with the shepherds of Nabal, and had left a most favorable impression. Living close to the desert, Nabal was constantly exposed to marauding bands. The town is now known as *Kermel*.

3. Nabal. Literally, "foolish," "senseless." The probable meaning of his wife's name, Abigail, is "my father is joy," or "father of rejoicing."

8. Thy son David. David assumes this title out of respect to one his elder. Modern travelers in this district note that the present-day manners and customs are almost identical with those of David's day.

Though an outlaw himself, so far as Saul was concerned, David had been the protector of his people from the predatory attacks from the desert. He had preserved the flocks of Nabal at no expense to their owner. Sheep owners would normally be happy to

reward those helping them against loss. David's request for supplies was legitimate and in harmony with the customs of his time.

10. *Who is David?* Such insulting remarks would scarcely have been made if David had abode still at Maon. The reference to the servants breaking away may be either to David's breach with Saul or to these young men whom Nabal curtly dismissed with the insinuation that he could not tell whether they were David's men or not (see v. 11).

13. *David also.* David made a serious blunder in his hasty decision to seek personal revenge. He had yet to learn the lesson of patience. This valuable trait was later acquired. Observe the contrast between his attitude here and later, when Absalom tried to usurp the kingdom. In David's flight from Jerusalem, Shimei, of the house of Saul, threw stones at him and cursed him. When one of his men wanted to kill the offender, David said, "Let him alone, and let him curse. ... It may be that ... the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day" (2 Sam 16:11, 12).

14. *Told Abigail.* What turn of events attached a woman of such a disposition to such a rash, impetuous man as Nabal is not known, but often two people of diametrically opposite natures are brought together in the most intimate relationships of husband and wife. This was probably not the first time that Abigail had been called upon to act as peacemaker between her husband and his associates. Little did Abigail realize in her daily ministrations to Nabal that she was developing a clearness of spiritual perception and a strengthening of her womanly intuition that would one day enable her to keep David from a serious error (vs. 18–28).

17. *Son of Belial.* Literally, "son of worthlessness," or "son of wickedness." Belial does not appear to be a proper name at this time, though it later came to be regarded as such (see 2 Cor 6:15).

18. *Five measures.* Literally, "five seahs." A seah is 6.66 dry qt. (7.33 liters); 5 seahs would total about a bushel (36.65 liters).

Clusters. Probably "lumps" (see margin). The ancient custom was to press dried grapes into cakes.

24. *Upon me, my lord.* A gracious gesture, and one that had probably become habitual with her. No doubt oft, unbeknown to Nabal, she had turned his folly into a new lease on life in the hope that he might see the beauty of an entirely different concept of life. This noble woman represented herself as the one on whom the folly rested and therefore the one to receive the punishment.

25. *As his name.* See on v. 3.

Saw not the young men. Nabal, as head of the home and representative of the family in all the business arrangements, had not included his wife in his thought. By taking her into his confidence, endless troubles might have been avoided, but now she was the one to pick up the broken threads and accept all the blame for untoward incidents.

26. *Hath withholden thee.* Abigail gave credit, not to her own ingenuity, but to Jehovah for having turned David from his hasty purposes. Such words as she uttered could come only from one who had a deeply religious turn of mind.

27. *Blessing.* Abigail gave this name to her gift, implying that she was directing attention away from herself as the donor to God, who was supplying these bounties in answer to the petitions of David.

28. *Forgive the trespass.* See v. 24. Abigail was basing her request on two important considerations:

(1) David was fighting the battles of the Lord. Her reference to this fact was an implied rebuke that David was not now on an errand of the Lord, but on a mission entirely of his own choosing. In his battle against the Philistines at Keilah, David had made careful inquiry as to the will of God in the matter (ch. 23:2). No such consultation had taken place in the present instance. David did not have the approval of Heaven for his present undertaking.

(2) David would be incurring guilt, from which his life had been reasonably free up till the present. The expression, “evil hath not been found in thee,” is an observation from a human point of view. David had made serious mistakes (see ch. 21:1, 2, 12, 13). But Abigail is obviously evaluating David’s character from the point of view of his competency for his future position as king of Israel. His defections up to this point had not as yet disqualified him for holding this high office. But had he carried out his purposes against Nabal, the incident would have raised serious queries in the minds of the people as to David’s fitness for being their future king. If he was to continue his policy of exterminating those of the citizens of his realm who dared oppose his will, his administration would be quite undesirable.

29. Yet a man. The Hebrew appears to be general, “should a man.” Abigail was obviously thinking about Saul, but her language was diplomatic.

Bundle of life. Heb. *şeror hachchayyim*. Literally, “bundle of the living.” The figure is borrowed from the custom of tying up valuables in a bundle so that the owner may carry them about his person. The Hebrew words are used on Jewish gravestones today, with reference, according to Jewish authorities, to the future life.

31. Grief. Heb. *puqah*, literally, “stumbling.” The word is used figuratively for qualms of conscience. Abigail pleaded with David to conduct himself in such a way that, when he became king, he would thank God for sending a steadying power in his moments of despair and self-pity over ingratitude heaped upon him. After all, she had been obliged to put up with this independent, grudging, and jealous churl much longer than David.

33. Blessed be thy advice. It requires humility of heart to receive rebuke kindly. David made no effort to justify his actions. His heart overflowed with gratitude to the one who had saved him from a rash and murderous deed.

35. I have hearkened. The ready acceptance of rebuke is to be commended. David had accustomed himself to witnessing the mysterious workings of Providence, and he saw the divine handiwork in the happenings before him. He thanked God for starting the train of events that culminated in Abigail’s meeting him at precisely the right place and moment, and for the encouragement of such a spiritual-minded soul as Abigail.

37. His heart died. That is, he sank into a condition of insensibility.

Became as a stone. He became paralyzed.

38. The Lord smote Nabal. The Scriptures frequently present God as doing that which He does not prevent. Nabal had had his opportunity. The presence of a godly wife had had no effective influence upon him. He forfeited his right to the further protection of God over his life.

42. Became his wife. David was already married (ch. 18:27). Polygamy was the custom of the day, and David’s act would not be regarded as reprehensible by the people of his time. God tolerated the custom in this period as He had earlier (see on Deut. 14:26), winking at the times of ignorance (see Acts 17:30). Nevertheless polygamy

brought in its wake much sorrow and misery, from which the people would have been spared if they had been willing to accept the original pattern that God had given in Eden (Gen. 2:24; cf. Matt. 19:5).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–44PP 663–668

1 PP 663

1–5PP 664

6–17PP 665

18, 19, 23–29PP 666

30–33, 36, 37PP 667

38, 42 PP 668

CHAPTER 26

1 *Saul, by the discovery of the Ziphites, cometh to Hachilah against David. 5 David coming into the trench stayeth Abishai from killing Saul, but taketh his spear and cruse. 13 David reproveth Abner, 18 and exhorteth Saul. 21 Saul acknowledgeth his sin.*

1. Hachilah. See on ch. 23:19. Many try to equate the narrative of this chapter with that recorded in chs. 23 and 24 and give as their reasons the following similarities: (1) the Ziphites as Saul's informants, (2) David's location in Hachilah, (3) Saul's company of 3,000 men, (4) the urgings of David's men that he kill Saul, (5) David's refusal to touch the Lord's anointed, (6) Saul's penitence, and (7) David's comparison of himself to a flea. On the other hand there are marked differences, such as: (1) David's place of hiding; (2) the discovery of Saul, in the one instance, after he entered the cave, whereas in the other the movements of the king were observed by scouts; (3) David's material evidence, in the first instance a piece of Saul's garment, in the second, Saul's spear and water cruse. There is no valid reason for accepting the two accounts as variant renderings of the same incident. Between the two incidents David had been hiding in the Wilderness of Paran and had had his unfortunate experience with Nabal. Now, as he came north again, the Ziphites reported his presence to Saul. Exasperated that David would dare return to the district around Hebron, Saul forgot his recent promise to his son-in-law, and in a fit of madness started once more on the warpath to capture his rival.

5. Trench. Heb. *ma'gal*, a "[wagon] track," an "entrenchment," perhaps a "camp." The word occurs in ch. 17:20 for the encampment or entrenchment of Saul's army at the time of Goliath's challenge. Probably David and his men saw the opposing army pitching their camp for the night and David could see Saul's place in the midst of his army. Abner, Saul's cousin (ch. 14:50), was his bodyguard.

6. Ahimelech the Hittite. This man's name occurs only here. Hittites are mentioned as early as the time of Abraham (Gen. 23:3–20). These descendants of Heth were settled about Hebron. From them Abraham purchased a burial place for his wife, Sarah. Later the Hittites developed into a powerful nation, occupying a strategic position in Asia Minor, and in due time became the balance of power in the district near the great bend of the Euphrates River in what is now known as northern Syria and Turkey. Then when the Aegean Sea Peoples migrated through Asia Minor on their trek toward Egypt, the Hittite empire was practically wiped out of existence. There were Hittite remnants in Palestine in Solomon's day (1 Kings 9:20, 21). Probably this Ahimelech was in some way connected with the tribe of Judah through marriage, and felt he would be safe only by connecting

himself with David. He had probably distinguished himself so greatly that David had given him a place as his guard.

Abishai. The grandson of Jesse. Abishai was the son of David's sister, Zeruiah, and therefore David's nephew. Abishai's brother Joab (1 Chron. 2:16) was the leader of David's forces.

8. Let me smite him. Abishai had not learned the difficult lesson of exercising magnanimity toward an enemy. Saul had started an intertribal feud between Benjamin and Judah, and Abishai evidently concluded that such an action called for retaliation. Saul had thrown his spear at David, but had missed. Now, according to Abishai's judgment, it was David's turn, and as his bodyguard, Abishai was offering to act on behalf of his uncle.

9. Destroy him not. David exercised independent thought. He was above taking any living man as his criterion for conduct. He had developed his philosophy of life, not from tradition, but from the principles laid down in divine revelation. Among the precepts of the Mosaic law, with which David had familiarized himself, was the following: "You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people" (Ex. 22:28, RSV). David possessed keen spiritual discernment and understood this law to prohibit such action against the king as Abishai advocated. David's spiritual interpretation of the Mosaic regulations was far advanced over that of the Jewish leaders in Christ's day, who tried to maintain the letter of the law while violating its spirit! David's ability correctly to interpret Scripture was aided by the guidance given him through (1) the prophets, (2) the Urim and Thummim, (3) the mileposts of providential protection that, for many years now, had been erected in his life, (4) the historical evidences of God's power during the past centuries as rehearsed at the feet of Samuel in the schools of the prophets, (5) the inspiration received through his association with kindred souls filled with the same spiritual discernment, and (6) the gift of the Holy Spirit that enabled him to speak by inspiration (see 2 Sam. 23:2).

10. As the Lord liveth. David was content to leave all in God's hands, and in no way try to prescribe the course for God to follow. He gladly laid all his plans at the Master's feet, to await patiently the unfolding of the mysterious workings of God.

11. The spear. David was keenly alive to the need of securing material evidence of his attitude toward Saul. While expecting God to do great things for him, he knew that he too had a part to act in the present situation.

12. A deep sleep. What an encouragement it must have been for David to realize the protection of the Most High as he and Abishai carefully threaded their way through the ranks of Saul's forces! The miracle that enabled these men to move back and forth through the lines of 3,000 men, to the very center of the group, without detection, was evidence as to which side of the controversy Providence was on. The intervention was a condemnation of Saul's changeable nature in pledging himself to one thing, and a short time later violating his word and doing exactly the opposite.

17. Is this thy voice? Since it was probably still dark, Saul would be able to recognize David only by his voice.

18. What have I done? David's attitude toward Saul was respectful and full of loving entreaty. He might have said, "Why have you violated your covenant with me before God? How long are you going to continue sinning against me and against the Lord?" But these words would only have roused the anger of Saul. It requires tact to administer

rebuke so as to achieve a changed attitude on the part of the one in error. David's effort accomplished all that might be expected from one so hardened as Saul (see v. 21).

19. *If the Lord.* David presents before Saul two possible solutions that might be paraphrased thus: (1) If because of a sin on my part, ignorantly committed against you or against all Israel, over which you are the anointed king, God has impressed you to execute judgment against me, permit me to follow the instructions in the Torah and seek forgiveness in the divinely constituted manner (Lev. 4). (2) But if through vile, slanderous gossip, if through whispered calumnies, you have been urged to hunt me down as a rebel, feeling I am trying to usurp your place, the evidence at En-gedi and again here proves the falsity of such words and actions. Therefore those who are urging you on are cursed before God according to the regulations of the same Torah (Deut. 27:24–26), and you should not follow them, nor be guided by their counsel.

Driven me out. David poured out his heart to Saul as in a fit of despondency. Instead of being accepted as a servant (v. 18), which position he would have been so happy to fill, he had been pursued as an outlaw; his king had become his enemy, and the one he would gladly follow with respect had now compelled him to flee as a partridge on the mountain (v. 20). But far worse than this, he was being driven from “the inheritance of the Lord,” the land of his forefathers, and from the religion that had been his chief joy and solace all these years. He had been forced to live in the holes of the earth, in the wildernesses of the desert, and among the enemies of his own people. Now the only apparent safety for him and his men lay in utter exile.

20. *A flea.* Literally, “one flea,” as in ch. 24:14.

21. *Then said Saul.* Saul found himself completely overcome for the moment when he saw that his life had once more been precious in the eyes of David. The magnanimity of this outlawed patriot forced from his lips several noteworthy confessions: (1) “I have sinned” in secretly planning the death of a neighbor; (2) “I have played the fool” in repeating my attempt to kill the one who has graciously spared my life; (3) I “have erred exceedingly” in giving way to self-pity and the passion of the lower nature. He invited David to return to Gibeah and pledged his protection. Though the invitation to return was a kindly gesture, it would have led to an exceedingly difficult situation, for Saul had given David's wife to another (ch. 25:44).

22. *David answered.* The narrative records no direct reply of David acknowledging Saul's invitation. Perhaps there was in Saul's tone, rather than in his words, somewhat of a patronizing air that David was quick to discern, and that convinced him that the one now apparently so humble was still proud and obstinate. David had no assurance that Saul's present frame of mind would long continue.

24. *Much set by.* Literally, “magnified,” that is, great in value. Twice over, David asserted his integrity in preserving Saul's life, but instead of trusting himself in the hands of the king he prayed God's protection over himself in all his tribulations.

25. *Went on his way.* Despairing of any permanent change in Saul's attitude, David chose to remain a fugitive.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–25PP 668–672

1, 2, 4–8PP 668

9–19PP 671

15, 16 PP 698

CHAPTER 27

1 *Saul hearing David to be in Gath seeketh no more for him. 5 David beggeth Ziklag of Achish. 8 He, invading other countries, persuadeth Achish he fought against Judah.*

1. I shall now perish. David failed to realize that in spite of Saul's conniving, God was silently working out His will. He interpreted recent happenings as evidence of the hopelessness of reconciliation and of the gradual success of Saul's plan to ruin and destroy him. In the past David had enjoyed the guidance of Gad and Abiathar—of the Urim and Thummim—but now in discouragement he turned from divine help and laid plans on his own responsibility. Nevertheless, God graciously turned David's mistakes into steppingstones toward ultimate success!

Nothing better. In spite of all David had done for his own countrymen, they manifested but little sympathy for him now that he was in disfavor with the king. The men of Keilah would have turned him over to Saul (see ch. 23:1–13). The Ziphites twice informed Saul of his hiding place (chs. 23:19; 26:1), and Nabal proved as unfriendly as Doeg had been (ch. 25:10, 11). Twice he had extended the hand of mercy to the jealously insane tyrant who openly sought his life (chs. 24:6–11; 26:8–12). From the very people who should have shown him every courtesy he had received only censure and ingratitude, and his life among them had been one continuous nightmare. Living on short rations in caves and forests, in deserts and on mountain crags, he had been treated as an outlaw.

Not long before these incidents (ch. 22:5), God had directed David to return from Moab to Judah. There was much to be done for his own countrymen, and David responded gladly. He may have concluded that his call to return to Judah arose from the need of protecting its people against raids by neighboring nations. But it was probably God's purpose to demonstrate before all Israel the fortitude, humility, and courage of the one chosen to be king—a faith that waited patiently for God to work out His will in His own good time.

Time and again the Lord wrought for David, and the common people must have begun to think of him as having a charmed life. But after each marvelous deliverance there came another severe test, and David eventually began to feel the futility of seemingly endless danger and uncertainty. To provide for the hundreds of men who now followed him, and to hold them together, would tax the energies of the ablest of men. True, Abigail and Jonathan had encouraged David, but the majority were against him. His faith grew weak.

Downhearted, he finally sought refuge among the enemies of the Lord. In such a course, it seemed to him, lay his only safety. Contrary to the will of God, David now set foot on a thorny road of duplicity and intrigue. Sacrificing confidence in God for his own idea of safety, David tarnished the faith God would have all His servants exhibit before men and angels. How different might have been the history of Israel had David sought

⁷Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Sa 21:6). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

and followed the counsel of the Lord as earnestly before leaving Judah as he had previously done upon leaving Moab (see ch. 22:5).

2. Achish, the son of Maoch. The name “Achish” is of uncertain derivation. Some scholars think this Achish the same as that mentioned in 1 Kings 2:39 as the son of Maachah. But Maoch is the masculine form of the word, whereas Maachah is the feminine (see 1 Kings 15:2; 1 Chron. 2:48; 3:2; 7:15; etc.). If both passages refer to the same person, the Achish of 1 Kings 2:39 would have been very aged, for the incident there recorded occurred nearly 50 years after David first fled to Achish (1 Sam. 21:10). But if Achish, son of Maoch, married a woman by the name of Maachah, the son could be referred to as the “son of Maachah,” and therefore the grandson of Maoch. It is probable, however, that the Achish before whom David feigned madness (1 Sam. 21:12, 13) is the same king to whom David now fled. At most the two incidents were not many years apart. In the first instance David was alone; now he was accompanied by hundreds of followers with their families. For a time, at least, the refugees remained in Gath. According to the Targums “Gittih” in the titles of Ps. 8, 81, and 84 designates a musical instrument invented, or a type of music first composed, by David during his sojourn at Gath, thinking *gittith* to be from *Gath*. It was on one of his visits to Gath that David composed the 56th psalm, according to its title, which reads, “When the Philistines took him in Gath.” See on 1 Sam. 21:13.

4. Sought no more. Saul would naturally refrain from invading hostile territory in order to capture David; such a move would have provoked a war for which he was unprepared. The wording of the text leaves little doubt that, had David remained in Judah, Saul would have forgotten even his latest promise, and pursued him once more. Perhaps Saul hoped this time, as upon a former occasion (1 Sam. 18:17, 25), that David would fall at the hands of the Philistines.

6. Ziklag. The name is of uncertain derivation. It is first mentioned in Joshua 15:31, as one of the cities in Judah’s inheritance. But when Simeon was awarded certain cities within the borders of Judah, Ziklag was transferred to that tribe (see Joshua 19:1–5). Ziklag was situated in the eastern part of the plains country, and had been taken from Simeon by the Philistines in the days of the judges. It was probably on the site now known as *Tell el-Khuweilfeh*, 20 1/4 mi. (32.4 km.) southwest of Adullam and 9 1/2 mi. (15.2 km.) north by east from Beersheba. It was to Ziklag that many recruits from the tribes of Benjamin, Gad, Manasseh, Judah, and other tribes joined David (1 Chron. 12).

7. A full year. Heb. *yamim*, literally, “days.” In Lev. 25:29 *yamim*, “a full year [literally, “days”],” is clearly equivalent to “a whole year [*shanah*, the usual word for “year”].” In 1 Sam. 1:3 Elkanah is said to have gone to Shiloh “yearly,” literally, “from days to days.” In ch. 2:19 the same idiom is translated “from year to year.”

8. Went up, and invaded. Though David was hunted like a beast of prey by Saul and spurned by his countrymen, he never wavered in his concern for Israel. Ziklag bordered on the territory of desert marauders who had troubled Israel ever since their entrance into Canaan. The Lord had ordered the complete annihilation of such predatory tribes as the Amalekites (Ex. 17:16; Num. 24:20; Deut. 9:1–4; Deut. 25:17–19; cf. Gen. 15:16), and as the anointed heir to the throne David felt responsible to carry out what Saul had failed to accomplish. David no doubt intended thus to merit the loyalty of his own nation.

The Geshurites. When Israel invaded the lands of Sihon and Og (Joshua 12), they came to the border of the Geshurites, near Mt. Hermon (Joshua 12:5; 13:11). It is possible that these Geshurites had migrated northward from the Negeb (see on Gen. 12:9; Judges 1:9) and the desert of Paran, and that a related tribe lived near Philistia.

The Gezrites. More accurately, “Girzites.” Their location is known only from their close association with the Amalekites in the desert “as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt.”

The Amalekites. See on ch. 15:2.

9. David smote the land. The desert tribes had been the enemies of Israel for centuries and had intermittently raided Israelite communities adjacent to the desert. Earlier, when Saul “utterly destroyed” all the Amalekites (ch. 15:8), it is likely that many of them disappeared into the desert, and in a short time reappeared to continue their raids. The wandering Bedouin peoples have a mysterious way of disappearing suddenly, only to reappear in time. The statement that David “left neither man nor woman alive” refers, of course, only to those residing in the communities he attacked. The one way to bring permanent peace to the border towns of Israel was to drive these tribes back so far into the desert that they would hesitate to return. It was almost impossible to exterminate them. They lived on loot secured through guerrilla warfare, and much of the stock and other supplies David captured upon this occasion had probably been taken from Israelite communities in the first place.

10. The south of Judah. Literally, “the Negeb of Judah” (see on Gen. 12:9). The area occupied by these tribes lay within the Negeb. Thus, while David was raiding in the “Negeb of Judah,” he was not fighting against his own people, but with foreign peoples who had trespassed on Judah’s territory. At the same time his statement was sufficiently ambiguous to permit Achish to interpret it otherwise.

Jerahmeelites. Jerahmeel was the first-born son of Hezron, the grandson of Judah (1 Chron. 2:9, 25). He was probably born after Jacob went to Egypt, for he is not mentioned among the 70 persons of Jacob’s household who migrated to Egypt (Gen. 46:12). It is not certain whether this clan accompanied Israel in the Exodus movement or not. They seem to have settled in the region south of Hebron. They probably lived as nomads, and took no part in the national affairs of Israel.

Kenites. See on Gen. 15:19.

11. Tidings. This word has been supplied and should obviously be omitted. What is meant is that David took no prisoners back with him to Ziklag, lest these slaves should inform the Philistines of the raid.

12. Achish believed. The duplicity of David was another serious blunder, unworthy of one who had been so highly exalted in spiritual privileges. The price of victory in the conflict with sin is unceasing vigilance and constant surrender to the will of God. But the goodness of God did not forsake David in his hour of discouragement. David possessed a fixedness of purpose and a sincere desire to cooperate fully with the program of God. This attitude led him to acknowledge his sins upon their disclosure and to set out immediately to rectify his errors.

David made his first mistake in leaving Judah. To the sin of deserting his fellow countrymen without divine permission he added the second sin of duplicity. Had David remained in Judah, God could have delivered him as He had previously done. When Israel went to Gilboa to withstand the Philistine attack (ch. 28:4), David might have been

used of the Lord to bring about such a victory as to win the popular acclaim of the entire country. While Saul had made a serious mistake in seeking the life of David, David now made an almost fatal blunder in leaving his own land without definite counsel from God.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–12 PP 673, 674

1, 2 PP 672

3, 5, 6, 12 PP 672

CHAPTER 28

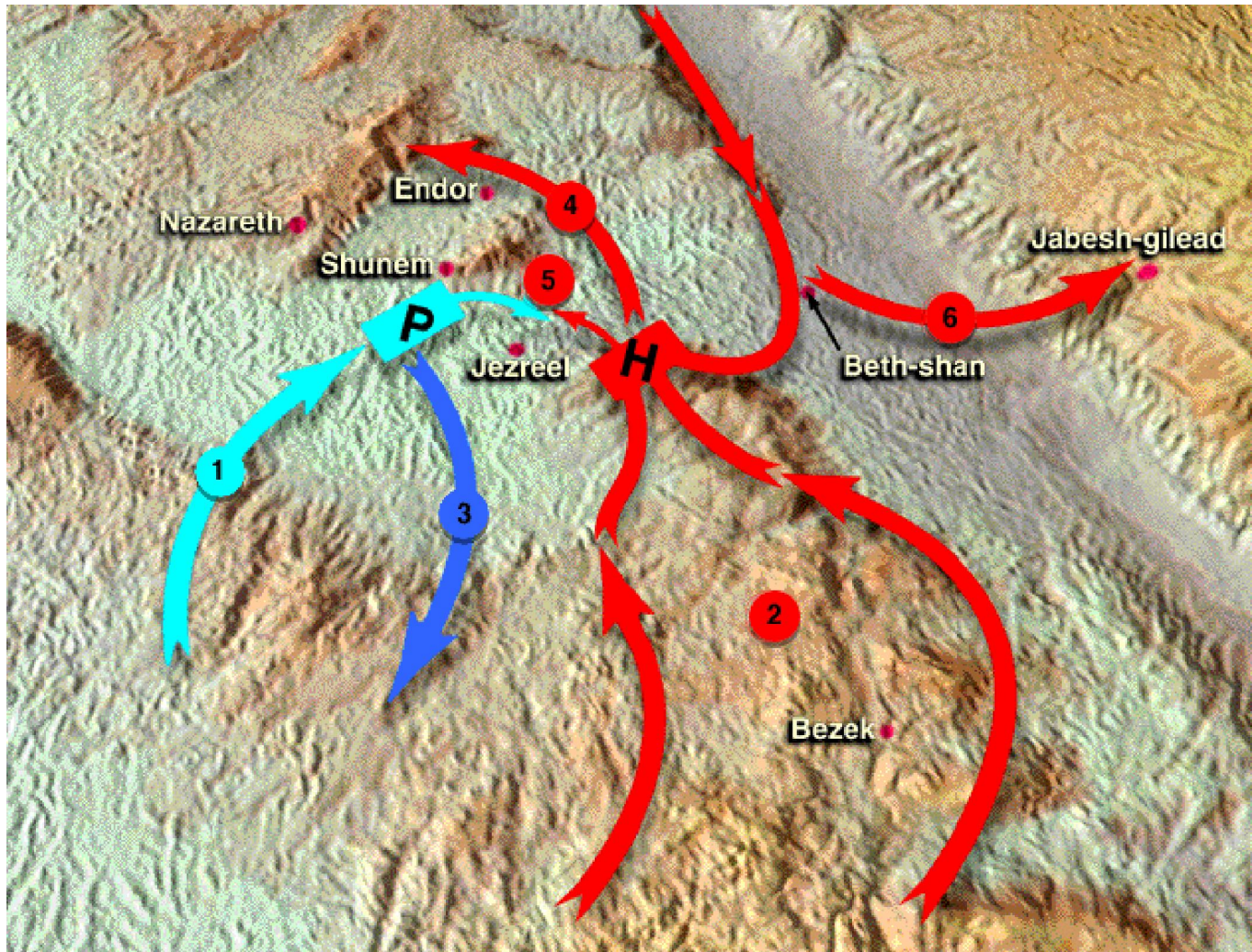
1 *Achish putteth confidence in David.* 3 *Saul, having destroyed the witches,* 4 *and now in his fear forsaken of God,* 7 *seeketh to a witch.* 9 *The witch, encouraged by Saul, raiseth up Samuel.* 15 *Saul, hearing his ruin, fainteth.* 21 *The woman with his servants refresh him with meat.*

1. *Thou shalt go out.* This was not an invitation but an order. David, as a vassal of Achish, was under the heathen king's command. The Philistine ruler had checked David's movements during the past months, and what he had heard had satisfied him that David had become so closely knit to the Philistines that the Israelite troops would be a valuable addition to the expeditionary force moving north in a few days.

Saul's Last Battle Against the Philistines **1 Samuel** **28–31**

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⁸Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Sa 27:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



2. *Thou shalt know.* David himself was not certain about how to avoid fighting, once he actually came to the battle. In his heart he had no thought of lifting his sword against his own nation, yet because of past associations with Achish he felt that he could not refuse to accompany him to the battle. Again, he seemed forced to resort to double dealings. His ambiguous reply was much like the oracles of the gods. Whichever way the events turned out, the oracle would be correct. Yet his answer was understood by Achish as a pledge of assistance, and in return he pledged David great and attractive reward (see PP 674).

3. *Samuel.* Samuel had evidently been dead for some time (ch. 25:1). This verse seems to have been thrown in parenthetically to introduce the main theme of the chapter, Saul's visit to the woman of En-dor.

Had put away. The narrative gives no hint as to what period in his reign Saul abolished necromancy in the land. Some think it was probably early, but others suggest that the action was taken when Saul found himself possessed of an evil spirit, and that he hoped thereby to rid himself of the cause of all his trouble. Spiritism was a common practice among the nations round about, but Israel had been forbidden to have anything to do with it (Deut. 18:9–14). See PP 676.

4. *Shunem.* Now *Sôlem*, about 3 mi. northeast of Jezreel, at the southern base of the Hill of Moreh across the valley from Mt. Gilboa. This valley, called Jezreel or Esdraelon, was a fertile, well-watered plain easily accessible from the coastal plains through the pass at Megiddo. The valley extended southeastward, cutting the central mountains and descending eastward to the Jordan valley at Beth-shan. The Hill of Moreh and Mt. Gilboa stand at the eastern end of the broad plain of Esdraelon proper, and form a watershed for that part of Palestine. All the water east of this drains into the Jordan; all west flows into the Kishon River, and thence to the Mediterranean Sea. The large valley lying between these two mountains, and forming a somewhat lower extension of Esdraelon, is the Valley of Jezreel, drained by the river Jalud, which flows past Beth-shan on its way to the Jordan.

Although there is no definite statement to that effect, the fact that the Philistines could pass clear through the valley to Shunem indicates that while Saul had been so intent on finding David, he had been most remiss in protecting his frontiers, and the Philistines had taken advantage of this laxity. Saul's mad passion to rid the land of David, had involuntarily opened the whole country to the invasions of the Philistines. The invaders had probably overrun much of the territory belonging to Issachar, Zebulun, and Asher. From the top of Mt. Gilboa, Saul could get a commanding view of the Valley of Jezreel and the opposing army nestled at the base of Moreh some 4 or 5 mi. distant. Perhaps Israelite scouts had intensified Saul's desperation by warning him concerning David's presence with the Philistine host, and he feared lest David now seek revenge (see PP 675).

6. *Enquired of the Lord.* There is no discrepancy between this statement and that in 1 Chron. 10:14 which states that Saul did not inquire of the Lord. Hebrew words are frequently more inclusive in their meaning than our English words. The word "enquire" may, as in 1 Chron. 10:14, include the whole process of (1) asking for the information, (2) receiving an answer, (3) acting favorably upon the answer. In the verse now under consideration Saul did not make this kind of inquiry. The word "enquired" is used in its more restrictive sense. Saul did make approaches to God for information, but the Lord made no reply.

Answered him not. The Lord never turns away any soul who comes to Him in humility and sincerity. The answer may not come in the manner expected or at the time expected, but God takes note of the petition and works what is best under the circumstances. The frantic appeals of Saul reached the divine ear, but in view of the situation, God chose not to impart the information the king was seeking. Saul had deliberately refused to wait for God's counsel at Gilgal (ch. 13:8-14), or to accept any messages contrary to his kingly ideas. He had had access to the tabernacle at Nob, but had murdered the priests. Inasmuch as Saul had voluntarily chosen to follow his own counsel, God permitted him to reap the fruit of such sowing. Had he been repentant and submissive, God could have turned his mistakes into steppingstones to success. Saul's experience illustrates the truth, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7; cf. 5T 119).

The text seems to indicate that in his desperation, Saul tried hurriedly to inquire by means of dreams, Urim, and prophets, but all three were silent. Since Abiathar had the ephod in his possession, some think that Saul ordered another made.

7. *Seek me a woman.* In his mad haste Saul turned to the source of information he himself had condemned (v. 3). The man who was once filled with spiritual zeal now gave way to the heathen superstition of calling on the supposed spirits of departed souls for help.

That hath a familiar spirit. Heb. *ba'alath-'ob*. *Ba'alath* means “mistress.” *'Ob* should be rendered “necromancer,” or, in modern language, “a medium” (see RSV; see also on Lev. 19:31). The word is also used of necromancy, as in v. 8, where Saul literally says, “Inquire, I pray, for me by necromancy.” Our English word necromancy comes from two Greek words, *nekros*, dead, and *manteia*, divination, and describes the art of ascertaining the future by alleged communications with the spirits of the dead.

En-dor. A town on the north side of the Hill of Moreh, on the opposite side from the Philistine camp, about 7 mi. (11.2 km.) from where Saul was staying with his forces on Mt. Gilboa. It still bears the same name, *Endôr*.

9. *Wizards.* Literally, “knowing ones.” Wizards were supposed to possess special knowledge concerning the unseen world. They are classed with the necromancers and held, by God, in equal abhorrence (see Lev. 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut. 18:11; 2 Kings 21:6; 23:24; 2 Chron. 33:6; Isa. 8:19; 19:3).

Cause me to die. Saul’s national edict did not achieve the complete cooperation of all subjects. Imperial decrees frequently fail of securing universal conformity. The Roman persecutions of the Christians did not prevent Christianity from surviving and in many instances flourishing.

The woman, apparently informed by the spirits of Saul’s identity (see on v. 12), now feared for her own life (see on v. 25). In the full realization that her occult art was under the royal ban, she had nevertheless been practicing it in secret. Little did she realize that Saul himself had long been troubled by evil spirits (ch. 16:14–16), and was now completely at their mercy.

10. *No punishment.* Being the king, Saul felt he could claim for himself immunity from any law, and could also promise immunity to anyone who would help him out of his difficulty.

11. *Bring me up Samuel.* Why should Saul ask for Samuel above all others? The prophet had been the guide and mentor of the king, and had given several predictions at the time of Saul’s anointing that brought joy and peace when Saul saw them fulfilled. But as quickly as his despotic temperament began to show itself, his respect for divine counsel lessened. This attitude, in turn, developed into an indifference and even hatred, until the king neglected every administrative responsibility in his attempt to exterminate his rival. With the memory of David’s kindness on two different occasions still rankling in his diseased mind, Saul began to realize that he had failed in the eyes of many of his subjects whom he saw deserting him and fleeing to David. Greatly irritated because of Heaven’s silence, he sought some method of forcing a reply.

12. *Thou art Saul.* The information was supernaturally imparted—however, not by God. God had shown His abhorrence of the practice of necromancy by ordering the death of all who engaged in it (Lev. 20:27). Even those who consulted spiritualistic mediums were to be cut off (Lev. 20:6). Hence the communication must have come from some other source. There are those who hold that the spirits of the dead return to commune with the living. These would maintain that the spirit of Samuel responded to the

summons of the medium. But a communication from Samuel, speaking as a prophet, would indirectly be a communication from God, and it is expressly stated that the Lord refused to communicate with Saul (1 Sam. 28:6). Saul was slain, “for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; and enquired not of the Lord” (1 Chron. 10:13, 14).

The teaching that the spirits of the dead return to communicate with the living is based on the belief that the spirit of man exists in a conscious state after death, that indeed this spirit is the real man. The Bible does not teach that the spirit, at death, returns unto God, who gave it (Eccl. 12:7), but the OT emphatically denies that this spirit is a conscious entity (Job 14:21; Ps. 146:4; Eccl. 9:5, 6). The NT teaches the same doctrine. Jesus pointed forward to His second coming and not to death as the time when the believer will be reunited with his Lord (John 14:1–3). Otherwise, Jesus might have comforted His sorrowing disciples with the thought that death would soon overtake them and that thus they would immediately go to the heavenly realms to be with Him. In speaking solace to those who had laid their loved ones to rest, Paul significantly declared that there was to be no precedence on the part of the living over the dead, but all would be reunited with their Lord at the same moment (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

It is evident, then, that the spirit of Samuel did not here communicate with Saul. There remains one other source for the intelligence. The Scriptures reveal that Satan and his angels have the ability to impart information and also to change their form (see Matt. 4:1–11; 2 Cor. 11:13, 14). The apparition that appeared to the woman of En-dor was a satanic impersonation of Samuel, and the message imparted had its origin in the prince of darkness.

Although much of the phenomena of spiritistic séances involves trickery and sleight of hand, not all phenomena can be explained on this basis. Many who have investigated séances admit the presence of a power that cannot be accounted for on the basis of trickery or of known scientific laws.

The Scriptures predict an increase in supernatural manifestations in the last days (Matt. 7:22, 23; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13, 14; 16:14). The only safeguard against these delusive devices is to have the mind so well fortified with the truths of the Bible that the tempter will be recognized in his guise. A firm faith in the truth of the unconscious state of the dead will make powerless any attempt of the enemy to infiltrate his propaganda through spiritualistic mediums and supposed communications from the departed (see GC ch. 34).

It appears that the woman’s spirit informer took delight in divulging the information that uncovered Saul’s disguise, and mocked the king’s strange course in finally coming for help to the very power he had thought formerly to silence. In the presence of the satanic supernatural power the king’s bravado, self-justification, and alibis of every description fled as chaff before the wind.

13. Gods. Heb. *’elohim*, a title used more than 2,500 times of the true God (see Vol. I, pp. 170, 171), and frequently of false gods (Gen. 35:2; Ex. 12:12; 20:3; etc.). The KJV three times translates the word as “judges” (Ex. 21:6; 22:8, 9). It is possible that the word should be so translated here, thus making the woman say, “I see judges ascending from the earth.” This would be in harmony with the identification of Samuel as a judge. Though the woman used the plural form, Saul seems to have understood the singular, for

he questioned, “What form is *he* of?” On the other hand, she may have used the word *’elohim* in its more common sense, “gods.”

14. *What form?* Saul’s questions, together with the woman’s replies, are in themselves evidence that he did not see the apparition himself. Perhaps he was separated from the medium by a curtain, or perhaps he was standing directly before her in the midnight darkness of the cave. When she described the apparition, Saul “perceived that it was Samuel.”

It would be contrary to every principle of righteousness to imagine divine authority being given to a necromancer to summon Samuel from his place of rest. To think that God, who had placed His ban on necromancy (Deut. 18:10–12), would yield to the request of a medium, and disturb His sleeping saint, Samuel, would be wholly inconceivable. But as Satan had the power to appear before Jesus in the wilderness as an angel of light, so he or his agents could, if permitted, also impersonate Samuel, both in form and voice. The devil took this opportunity to taunt Saul with the irony of his fate. The very man who had once persecuted the exponents of this black art was now on his knees before that power, pleading for help.

15. *Samuel said.* This clause must not be interpreted as meaning that it was actually Samuel who spoke. The writer simply describes events as they appeared, which is the normal way in a narrative. The Bible also speaks of the sun as rising and setting, and so do we. Nor is anyone deceived or confused by the fact that we are thus speaking simply of appearances. Actually, the sun does not rise and set, rather the earth revolves. In the verse before us the context and a comparison with other scriptures make clear that an impersonation of Samuel was uttering the sayings here attributed to the deceased prophet (see on v. 12).

Bring me up. See v. 11, where the expression “bring up” twice occurs. Evidently the ancients, in general, envisioned a subterranean region as the dwelling place of the dead. If the doctrine held by most Christians, that a righteous man ascends to heaven at death, had been held in this ancient period, the summons would have been to bring Samuel down, and the spirit-impersonator of Samuel would have said, “Why have you brought me down?” This one point in the record is sufficient in itself to rule out this narrative as proof in behalf of the doctrine of the conscious state of the righteous dead.

16. *Thine enemy.* These words identify their author. The statement made here and in the following verses illustrates a characteristic device of the devil. Ever since his fall, Satan has endeavored to paint the character of God in false colors. He represents God as a revengeful tyrant, plunging into hell all those who do not fear Him (see GC 534). He lures men into sin and then presents their case as utterly hopeless. He represents God as unwilling to forgive the sinner as long as there is the least excuse for not receiving him. Thus he depicts God to men as their enemy. This concept lies at the basis of the heathen religions that teach the necessity of sacrifices to appease an angry God. How utterly contrary is such a doctrine to the teachings of the Scriptures, which represent God as exercising love to all, and willing to make a supreme sacrifice to save the guilty (John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9).

17. *Rent the kingdom.* The spirit, posing as a voice from heaven, taunted Saul by telling him that his crown would go to his rival. Satan inspired Saul’s associates to stir up the king’s animosity against David, and then turned his gall to wormwood by announcing, as accomplished, the very thing Saul had fought so long to prevent. He had

heard of David's being with the Philistines (PP 675), and now probably envisioned the enemies of the Lord as conquering him and giving the kingdom to David.

18. *Hath the Lord.* Though Satan inspired the thoughts that prompted Saul's disobedience in his dealings with Amalek, he now hurled condemnation at the king in the name of the Lord. Thus God was represented as employing the same tactics as Satan. God had not actually become Saul's enemy. He was merely permitting the harvest to be of the same quality as the sowing. Saul's present plight was the result of his own choice. God had endeavored to save him from disaster by sending repeated warnings and counsels, but Saul persisted in placing his finite judgment in opposition to divine instruction.

19. *Of the Philistines.* Because Saul voluntarily debased himself by playing into the hands of the adversary, Satan used this opportunity to taunt and discourage him. With the battle impending, Satan made Saul feel that he had lost. Actually the Lord might as readily have saved Israel now as He had at Mizpah (ch. 7:10). But at that time Israel confessed their sin and "cried unto the Lord." Had Saul confessed his sin, gathered all Israel together, told them of his weakness, and led the host in a renewed dedication to the Lord, the outcome of the battle might have been vastly different. By holding before the king the apparent hopelessness of any pardon, and the vastness of his rebellion against God, Satan succeeded in completely discouraging Saul and leading him on to his ruin.

20. *Straightway.* Literally, "hastened." Since the action was involuntary, the meaning would be that within a brief period of hearing the dread message he collapsed.

All along. Literally, "the fullness of his stature." The physical strain and mental worry, and finally the terrible news of his impending defeat and death, so unnerved him that his body failed him.

25. *They rose up.* Like Judas, Saul went forth into the night. Left to herself, the medium was doubtless as distraught as was the king. Saul had been guilty of duplicity and treachery in his dealings with David. How did she know but that her life would be the price for the happenings of that night? Saul had been too sick to speak any word of appreciation for her services. She did not have the consolation of prayer and faith. She was the slave of a power that would be as free to taunt her as to taunt the king.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-25PP 674-681

6-20PP 683-689

1, 2 PP 674

4, 5 PP 675

6 PP 683

6, 7 PP 676

7 AA 290; Ev 608

7, 8 PP 683

9 GC 556

8-11PP 679

12 PP 680

13, 14 PP 679

15-19PP 680

20-25PP 681

CHAPTER 29

1 *David marching with the Philistines, 3 is disallowed by their princes. 6 Achish dismisseth him, with commendations of his fidelity.*

1. *Aphek.* The name of several towns (see on ch. 4:1), but not of any known site near Mt. Gilboa, as would be implied, if chs. 28 and 29 are in chronological order: the Philistines camping first at Shunem opposite the Israelites on Gilboa (ch. 28:4), then moving to Aphek (ch. 29:1). But opinion is divided, in various reference books, between a northern Aphek and a southern one. If the narrative, after the story of Saul's Endor visit (ch. 28:3–25), turns back to resume the David story at the point where ch. 28:2 leaves off (David drafted by Achish to help the Philistines fight Israel), then ch. 29 continues thence with his dismissal by the Philistine lords at Aphek, where they "gathered together all their armies" (ch. 29:1). If this was the same gathering mentioned immediately preceding their coming to Shunem (ch. 28:4), Aphek was on the route from Philistia to Shunem but not necessarily near it. Hence many take it to be the Aphek generally identified with Antipatris, from which the Philistines had earlier attacked Israel (ch. 4:1) and taken the ark.

Fountain which is in Jezreel. There were two large springs in the Valley of Jezreel; one, 'Ain Jālūd, known as the "well of Harod," spurting forth from the north palisade of one of the shoulders of Mt. Gilboa, hundreds of feet above the valley, and the other, 'Ain Ṭuba'ūn, in the heart of the valley. It seems more likely that Saul would remain on the shoulder of the mountain above 'Ain Jālūd, a position largely inaccessible from the valley, and not go down to 'Ain Ṭuba'ūn, which, while nearer to the Philistines, would not give him any tactical advantage.

3. *What do these Hebrews here?* To David such an inquiry should have come as a stunning rebuke. He was entirely out of place in the camp of the enemies of his own people. He should not have sought refuge among the Philistines in the first place. The step had been taken without seeking divine guidance. Now the crisis was approaching. David was in great straits. He had no desire to take up arms against his brethren.

I have found no fault. What a contrast there must have been between Achish' expression of confidence in David's ability and trustworthiness and the latter's estimate of himself as he looked back on his duplicity and dishonesty! God pities those in perplexity and distress! He tenderly opens the door of escape that men may not be left wholly to the consequences of their conduct. He mercifully changes foolish blunders into steppingstones to success! Those who are willing to accept divine guidance in all humility, will find deliverance coming from unexpected sources in unlooked-for ways, and in the darkest hours of their experience. In the demand of these Philistine lords for the ousting of David from the camp, God was working for the deliverance of His servant.

4. *Make this fellow return.* Literally, "cause the man to return!" The word "this" is not in the Hebrew. The lords were respectful to Achish in referring to his associate, but the wording indicates there was great resentment in their hearts over David's presence.

6. *As the Lord liveth.* Literally, "as Jehovah liveth." This is a remarkable statement to come from a heathen king. Some have suggested that Achish may have been attracted to the religion of the Hebrews through his association with David, as Nebuchadnezzar was led to extol the "King of heaven" through the influence of Daniel and his companions (Dan. 4:37). Others see in the oath merely an adapted substitution for what Achish

actually did say. It cannot be denied that David by his behavior made a profound impression upon Achish. Thrice the king calls attention to the uprightness of David's life (1 Sam. 29:3, 6, 9), in the one instance comparing him to "an angel of God" (1 Sam. 29:9).

8. *What have I done?* David was thrilled at the unexpected turn of events that extricated him from his dilemma. However, in order not to betray his feelings, he directed this evasive question at the king as if to convey the impression that he was being wronged by this rude dismissal (see PP 691).

In a moment of discouragement, and not knowing which way to turn, David had taken steps that placed him in a dilemma from which he was totally unable to escape without outside help. If he deserted Achish and turned against the Philistines in battle, he would prove the truth of the Philistine lords' accusations. If he fought against Israel, he would fight against the Lord's anointed and help foreigners to subjugate his own native country (see PP 690). How merciful was the Lord in using the ill will and animosity of the Philistines to open the door for his release from disgrace, whichever way the battle turned!

David realized how much better it would have been had he remained in Judah. Had it not been that in his heart he wanted above everything else to be true to God, the Lord could not have wrought this deliverance for him. David's sins were not so much conscious and willful departures from the path of right, as weakness of faith and errors in judgment. He was called upon to make quick decisions, and did not always wait for a divine answer, trusting, perhaps, that Heaven would endorse his ideas. With all his heart he must have wished he had conducted himself differently. Now he was face to face with a gracious host who believed in him, had befriended him, but finally, because of political pressure, had to discharge him. As David listened to the king's reply of confidence and love, his heart must have burned with the shame of his own dissembling, and also thrilled anew with thanksgiving that, in spite of his sin, God had mercifully broken the snare in which he had been caught!

10. *Thy master's servants.* Literally, "the servants of thy lord." The word *'adon*, translated "master" here and in v. 4, "lord" in v. 8, is the common Hebrew word for addressing a superior. It should not be confused with the word *seren* applied to the Philistine lords (vs. 2, 6, 7), the rulers over the five cities (ch. 6:17; see on Judges 3:3). Another word, *śar*, generally translated "prince," is used synonymously with *seren* in 1 Sam. 29:3, 4, 9, in speaking of the same rulers. In 1 Sam. 29:4, 10, *'adon* seems to apply to Saul, and in 1 Sam. 29:8 David uses it when speaking to Achish. The use of these terms may suggest that Achish did not consider David his vassal any longer, but delicately intimated that David was at liberty to leave Philistia if he so desired.

As soon as ye be up. This was probably a diplomatic way of telling David that if the morning light should find him and his men still in the camp, the princes would put them to death. No doubt David felt greatly relieved at such an official release. Now there could be no feeling that he and his company had failed to appreciate the kindness of Achish in granting them an asylum from Saul. As David started home, he no doubt praised God for such divine protection and miraculous deliverance.

The narrative of this chapter illustrates the manner in which God works for the salvation of His children. He seeks to persuade men to accept His ways, yet leaves them

free to reject His suggestions if they wish. This is true, not only in the primary decision to serve God, but in all the major and minor choices that one who is seeking to live in harmony with the principles of God is called upon to make. It is inevitable that mistakes will be made, and the trials that result become proving grounds that reveal the error in judgment. David chose refuge in Philistia on the basis of self-protection from Saul. Suiting his actions to his feelings, he soon found the seeds of self-interest had produced a harvest of pretense and falsehood. But David acknowledged his error and at heart sought to follow the divine blueprint. This attitude enabled God to shape circumstances that brought deliverance to him, even though the difficulty in which David found himself was the result of his own mistake.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–11PP 690, 691

3–10PP 691

CHAPTER 30

1 *The Amalekites spoil Ziklag.* 4 *David asking counsel is encouraged by God to pursue them.* 11 *By the means of a revived Egyptian he is brought to the enemies, and recovereth all the spoil.* 22 *David's law to divide the spoil equally between them that fight and them that keep the stuff.* 26 *He sendeth presents to his friends.*

1. The third day. Although the exact site of Ziklag is not known, it was in the territory of Gath. Some identify it with *Tell el-Khuweilfeh*, southeast of Gaza. In that case it was about 50 mi. (80.5 km.) from the Aphek in the Plain of Sharon (see on ch. 29:1). Since David and his men did not leave until the day after their dismissal, they had only that second full day's march before the "third day," on which they arrived at Ziklag. Hence they probably marched the whole distance in two stages. This would average 25 mi. (40 km.) a day, and the exertion furnishes a reason for the utter exhaustion experienced by some of the men as they pressed on in pursuit of the Amalekites (v. 10).

2. Slew not any. This was not because of mercy, but because the women and children would bring good prices as slaves and concubines. It seems to have been a custom among the warring nations of the Near East to preserve women and children, especially virgins and female children (see Num. 31:15–18; Judges 21:1–24). David had acted unwisely in leaving Ziklag without protection.

David was probably hoping that his recent trips into the desert had deterred marauders from attempting raids for a time. He was anxious to make as good an impression as possible on the Philistine host by going north with Achish. He had evidently not counted on the news of the Philistine campaign, recently completed, filtering through to the desert so quickly (see on ch. 27:9).

5. The Jezreelitess. "Ahinoam the Jezreelitess" was the mother of David's first-born son Amnon, who later seduced his half sister Tamar (2 Sam. 13). There were at least two Jezreels in Palestine; one in the tribe of Issachar (Joshua 19:18), where the Israelites were then fighting against the Philistines; another in Judah (Joshua 15:54–56), closely associated with such places as Hebron, Maon, Ziph, etc. Some have located this Jezreel between Ziph and Carmel at a site now known as *Khirbet Terrāma*, but the site is uncertain.

6. Grieved. Heb. *marah*, literally, “was bitter.” See derivatives of the root *marah* in Ex. 15:23; Ruth 1:20. The bitterness of the men against their leader was evidently because David had left their home unprotected.

In the Lord. David’s attitude now was entirely different from his attitude during the months of his duplicity before Achish. He had received unmistakable evidence of God’s protection during the time of his great blunder in running away from Judah, and now with humble heart he met the new crisis. He “encouraged,” literally, “strengthened,” his heart in the Lord, and proceeded to call on Abiathar to make inquiry of the Lord by means of the Urim and Thummim (v. 7). This is the course he should have followed when contemplating his flight to Philistia.

9. The brook Besor. Thought to be the stream running past Gerar and emptying into the Mediterranean near Gaza. Its distance from Ziklag cannot be determined, for it is not known whether the northernmost or southernmost branch of the brook is referred to. Furthermore, the exact site of Ziklag is unknown.

11. An Egyptian. The fact that this “young man” was an Egyptian throws a lurid light on the character of these marauders. Even as they had raided Judah and the Philistine territory, they had evidently invaded parts of Egypt and taken captives to trade as slaves. No nation or tribe was safe from their depredations.

12. Three days and three nights. Since the lad had the information concerning the burning of Ziklag (v. 14), the destruction must have taken place at least three days previously, for three days ago he had been abandoned by the pitiless tribesmen (v. 13). The time was sufficient to enable the marauders to make their escape and to hide themselves in the trackless desert.

14. South of the Cherethites. Literally, “the negeb of the Cherethites.” The Cherethites are believed by some to have been Cretans. A comparison of Eze. 25:16 and Zeph. 2:5, indicates that the Cherethites occupied part of the Philistine seacoast; evidently the southern part, for the Amalekites reached them first as they approached from the desert of Shur. Ziklag was either in, or adjacent to, the territory of the Cherethites.

South of Caleb. Better, “the negeb of Caleb.” Caleb the Kenezite (Joshua 14:14) was given a portion of Judah’s allotment near Hebron (Joshua 15:13–19). Since the Amalekites resided in the desert toward Egypt (1 Sam. 15:7), and since the Calebites are mentioned as being raided after the Cherethites, it is probable that the invasion proceeded from the west to the east, striking the border of the Cherethites first. Then as the marauders swept eastward, carrying with them the Cherethite prisoners, they probably learned of David’s absence from his home district, and decided to return home by way of Ziklag, to destroy it, and then to flee back into the depths of the desert of Shur with their captives.

16. Eating and drinking. The Amalekites, stopping by some oasis to feast on their spoils, may be compared to the four Mesopotamian kings who raided this same district in the days of Abraham (Gen. 14), and started home with Lot and other captives from Sodom, only to stop near Hobah (Gen. 14:15), to celebrate their victory (see PP 135). The influence of the liquor left them totally unprepared for David’s swift assault.

17. Four hundred young men. The number that escaped is an index to the size of the host that took part in the raid, and of the number of stock they must have had with them when David came upon them. Having left his baggage at the brook Besor, David could outmaneuver the host encumbered with the loot. Fighting all through the night and on

into the next day, David finally released the captives, herded the stock together, and collected the supplies for return to Ziklag.

20. *All the flocks.* This verse is somewhat obscure. The words that the KJV supplies, as shown by the italics, do not offer much help. The LXX translates this verse, “And he took all the flocks, and the herds, and led them away before the spoils: and it was said of these spoils, These are the spoils of David.” The Hebrew seems to convey the idea that David recovered the cattle and other possessions that had formerly belonged to his company. In addition to these there were other large flocks and herds that the Amalekites had accumulated in their recent raiding expedition. These were designated as David’s spoils and moved ahead of the recovered cattle, as the party made its way home.

24. *Part alike.* A definite system for the distribution of spoils was imposed at the time Israel first fought the Midianites. Only a portion of the encampment went forth to war, but immediately after the battle the Lord instructed Moses to divide the booty into two parts, so that the warriors and those remaining with the stuff might share equally; definite amounts were also to be set aside for the Levites and for an offering to the Lord (see Num. 31:25–54). The plan was not always adhered to, but from David’s time on it appeared to be an established ordinance in Israel.

26. *A present.* David was far from being selfish and penurious. During the years of his wanderings, not only had many in Judah joined him, but many others had given him provisions. Up to the present he had been unable to repay their kindnesses. Now at the first opportunity he sent liberal portions from his abundant spoil. This gesture would naturally pave the way for the continued friendship of his countrymen, now that he was returning to Hebron on the death of Saul.

27. *Beth-el.* This would hardly be the Bethel in the tribe of Benjamin, but more likely Bethul, one of the towns in Judah’s allotment that was given to Simeon (Joshua 19:4), and not far from Ziklag.

South Ramoth. Literally, “Ramoth of the Negeb.” One of the towns given to Simeon (Joshua 19:8), but the exact location is not known.

Jattir. Thought to be the modern *Khirbet ‘Attîr*, several miles east of the main road between Hebron and Beersheba, and some 8 mi. (12.8 km.) southwest of Maon.

28. *Aroer.* Not the Aroer on the Arnon River (Joshua 12:2), the southernmost town of the kingdom of Sihon of Heshbon, but a town in the Negeb around 10 1/2 mi. (16.8 km.) southeast of Beersheba, now known as ‘*Ar‘arah*.

Siphmoth. Possibly one of the towns from which David received assistance when he went into the Wilderness of Paran (ch. 25:1), but unknown today.

Eshtemoa. Associated with Debir in the list of cities belonging to Judah (Joshua 15:20, 49, 50), and identified with the modern *es-Semû‘*, some 8 or 9 mi. south of Hebron, and close to the Wilderness of Ziph.

29. *Rachal.* The only reference to this place name in the entire Bible. The site is unknown. The LXX here reads “Carmel.”

30. *Hormah.* Anciently called Zephath (Judges 1:17). One of the cities in the Negeb assaulted by the children of Israel when they presumed to go into Canaan from Kadesh-barnea contrary to the commandment of the Lord (Num. 14:45), and again when Arad the Canaanite fought them after the death of Aaron (Num. 21:1–3).

Chor-ashan. The same as Ashan (Joshua 15:42–44) northwest of Beersheba. One of the nine towns of the Shephelah, associated with Keilah, and given to Judah.

Athach. Mentioned only here. The site is unknown.

31. All the places. As one anointed to be king, David gave evidence of his generous spirit by demonstrating regal liberality. The record does not mention gifts to the elders of Keilah, nor to the unfriendly town of Ziph (see ch. 23:11, 12, 19), although they may have been included in “all the places.”

The fact that he gave to “all the places” shows how dependent David was on the hospitality of various parts of the land of Judah.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–31PP 692–694

1–4, 6PP 692

8–19 PP693

20–24, 26PP 694

CHAPTER 31

1 *Saul having lost his army, and his sons slain, he and his armourbearer kill themselves. 7 The Philistines possess the forsaken towns of the Israelites. 8 They triumph over the dead carcasses. 11 They of Jabesh-gilead, recovering the bodies by night, burn them at Jabesh, and mournfully bury their bones.*

1. Israel fled. The armies of Israel appeared to have the tactical advantage in choosing Mt. Gilboa for their stand. It was difficult, from a military point of view, for the Philistines to cross the river Jalud and fight their way up Mt. Gilboa. Nevertheless Israel fell. The apostasy of Saul, who sought help from a familiar spirit, had precipitated the disaster. Israel had been forewarned that in the day of their refusal to be guided by the Lord’s statutes and covenant, they would “flee when none pursueth” (Lev. 26:17).

Fell down slain. Or, “fell down wounded.” The primary meaning of the Hebrew verb *chala*, from which is derived the noun here translated “slain,” is “to pierce.” It may mean to wound fatally, or merely to wound without inflicting immediate death, as is its meaning in v. 3.

2. Followed hard. The disastrous defeat taught the Israelites the folly of adopting the ways of the world in demanding a king. When that king became a tyrant, the whole nation became a party to his shortcomings, and shared responsibility with him.

Slew Jonathan. The question naturally arises, Why did the Lord permit Jonathan to be slain along with his father when his attitudes were totally contrary to those of Saul? Why could not he, a spiritual-minded soul, disavowing his father’s ideals, and sympathetically knitting himself with David in following the opening providences of the Lord, have been permitted to live? Why could not Ishbosheth have gone in his place, instead of living on to follow in his father’s footsteps? This is a question beyond the ability of man to answer (see GC 47). The records of sacred history reveal that persecution and death have been the lot of the righteous in all ages. Because of the implications of the great controversy Satan must be granted an opportunity to afflict the righteous. But the Christian’s comfort is that though the adversary may be able to destroy the body, he is not able to destroy the soul (Matt. 10:28). Once the relationship of the soul to God has been unalterably decided upon, the continuance or discontinuance of this present life is not of prime importance. We may magnify Christ “by life, or by death” (Phil. 1:20–23).

3. Hit him. Literally, “found him.”

Sore wounded. The Philistines realized the advantage of slaying Israel’s king. Probably a specially trained detachment was commissioned to search out Saul. A similar maneuver was carried out by the Syrians in their battle with Ahab and Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 18:28–34).

4. Abuse me. Or, “deal wantonly [or ruthlessly] with me.” Saul was fearful lest the Philistines treat him in much the same way that they had treated Samson. He had shown no such concern for David, but had plotted at one time to have him fall into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines (ch. 18:21–25).

Feel upon it. Like Judas, he took his own life. Perhaps, influenced by the tauntings of the evil spirit that he was going to die, he lost his reason and sought suicide in order to escape enemy abuse.

Opinions differ as to the exact method of his death. Presumably basing his narrative on the Amalekite’s story (2 Sam. 1:1–10), Josephus says that the Amalekite actually killed him when he found him still alive after falling on his sword (*Antiquities* vi. 14. 7). However, it appears evident that the young man invented his story for the purpose of winning the approbation of David (see PP 682, 695).

6. Saul died. See 1 Chron. 10:13, 14. Thus ended a life once so bright with promise. The ruin of Saul’s career and the loss of his soul were the results of his own fateful choice. Men are not pieces of inanimate clay in the hands of an arbitrary potter, but sentient beings who voluntarily offer themselves to the guidance of one or the other of two diametrically opposed powers. Saul, by his own volition, had invited the prince of darkness to control him. His master had paid him his wages.

7. The other side. On the north side of the Valley of Jezreel were the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun, and part of the tribe of Issachar. East of the Jordan were the half tribe of Manasseh and the tribe of Gad. By occupying the valleys of Esdraelon, Jezreel, and Jordan, the Philistines had made a complete line of cleavage through the center of Israel’s domain. The people who had so loudly demanded a king now had opportunity to view the results of their decision. In the face of such an ignominious defeat, they were made to realize how much better it would have been to await the word of the Lord than to run ahead of Him. Royalty and commoners alike were sharers in the woes that now had come.

A survey of Saul’s inglorious reign shows that whereas Samuel’s administration of law had been helpful, Saul’s was the reverse. Under his rule there had been no such things as security of life or property. Freedom from foreign aggression and strength of international relationships were unheard of. Through the hard lesson of experience, Israel had to learn the futility of placing in power a king who was mainly concerned with the enrichment of his own home and the enforcement of his arbitrary desires. The people had erred in judgment; Saul had erred in executive wisdom.

9. Cut off his head. The treatment shows the disdain the Philistines had for Israel, and reflects the degree to which Saul had been successful in throwing off the Philistine yoke. The decapitation was in accordance with the customs of the times and probably partially in retaliation for the manner in which Israel had treated Goliath (ch. 17:51–54). Saul’s head was placed in the temple of Dagon (1 Chron. 10:10), a shrine probably located in Ashdod (1 Sam. 5:2–7). This act would indicate that the Philistines gave Dagon credit for the great victory at Mt. Gilboa. They did not realize that they would have had no power at

all, except it had been given them from above (John 19:11). The Philistines had had abundance of evidence of the superiority of Jehovah over Dagon (see 1 Sam. 5), but they preferred to depend on their own ability and rejected God.

10. Ashtaroth. The plural form of Ashtoreth, a goddess otherwise known as Astarte, and often confused with the other similar Canaanite goddesses Asherah and Anath. The goddesses is often mentioned in the Bible in connection with the Canaanite god Baal (also called Hadad). To the Philistines, putting Saul's head in the temple of Dagon and his armor in the house of Ashtaroth meant victory over Israel's God, Yahweh.

Beth-shan. At the eastern end of the Valley of Jezreel, Beth-shan, now *Tell el-Husi*, near modern *Beisan*, was 8 or 10 mi. (13 or 16 km.) from the battlefield. It is uncertain whether the town had been occupied by the Philistines previously or had been taken subsequent to the battle.

11. Jabesh-gilead. See on ch. 11:1–11. Remembering that Saul had wrought so wonderfully for the deliverance of this city, the elders felt it a privilege to do honor to the body of their rescuer. Misfortune, defeat, and death all bring to light the hidden sympathies in the hearts of men, and reveal their noblest sentiments.

Fasted seven days. The inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead demonstrated unabated loyalty to their fallen leader. Having accorded his body and the bodies of his sons a respectable burial, they observed a brief period of mourning.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–13PP 681, 682

1–4PP 681

5, 7–10, 12, 13PP 682

⁹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Sa 28:2). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.